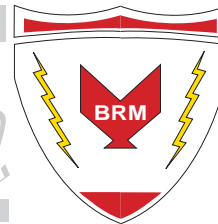




The BRM

Bulletin



A Service of Business Records Management, Inc.

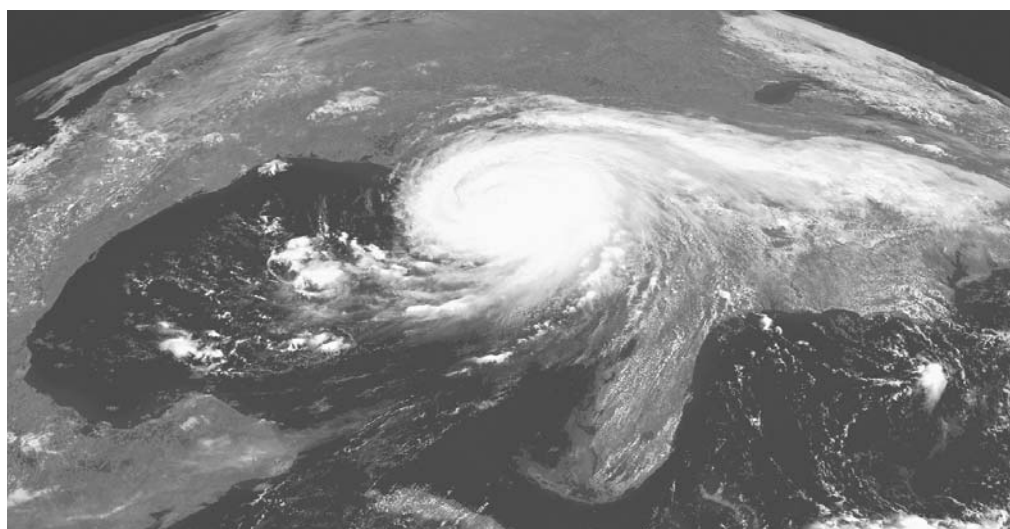
1st Quarter 2006

Hurricane Katrina:

Disaster Recovery Lessons Learned

In a frantic effort to save historical documents of every kind that were damaged by Hurricane Katrina, archivists and historians from around the country rushed to the Gulf area to remove dry items to safer ground, and to get wet documents into freezer trucks to halt the growth of mold. No electricity, no access to some areas, and lack of living/sleeping accommodations made their jobs almost impossible in some locations.

A document titled "Report of Hurricane Katrina Damage Assessment" dated September 21, 2005 was produced by a team that toured the Gulf Coast area of Mississippi to assess the impact of Hurricane Katrina on record-keeping facilities in the region. The team included Richard Pearce-Moses, president of the Society of American Archivists (SAA); Debra Hess Norris, chair of Heritage Preservation; and David Carmicheal, president of the Council of State Archivists (CoSA). Staff of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History helped with logistics and served as tour guides. Other partners were the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA); the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); the Council of State Library Administrators (COSLA); and the Society of Southwest Archivists (SSA).



Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf of Mexico in August 2005. The storm's impact caused great damage in New Orleans.

This group visited repositories that house public and private records, vital records, and historical collections. Their report is specific to damage from a storm surge, with some conditions that were different from those in New Orleans where water rose more slowly and records were immersed for longer periods of time.

Although many record keepers had been proactive in their attempts to preserve records, using Hurricane Camille in 1969 as a benchmark, most attempts fell short because of the enormity of Katrina's devastation. In some locations records were moved to second- or third-floor locations and were saved because of this.

In general, response to Katrina was less dependant on traditional disaster planning than on improvised actions for immediate conditions. For example, most disaster plans assume that trained records management staff will be responding to the disaster. After Katrina, many staff members had lost their homes and were necessarily preoccupied with their own physical needs. As a result, persons no experience in dealing with such a situation were sent to save records. Conversely, the team did find sites in which records staff personnel were hard at work at salvaging records although their own homes had been damaged or destroyed. Workers said that recovering records gave them something to focus on and a feeling of accomplishment.



The team identified action items in three categories: *Immediate, Short Term, and Long Term*. The immediate actions involved contacting national agencies or organizations to seek personnel to be deployed where needed; finding warehouse sites away from the coast where records could be stored during recovery; and developing information for print and broadcast media with advice for the public on salvaging personal belongings including a toll-free number for preservation assistance.

The Short Term actions set forth by the team included these ideas. Institute a once-a-year emergency preparedness day, possibly called May Day, on which the entire archival [and Records and Information Management] professions would focus attention on critical aspects of emergency planning. Essential information would be updated, verified and disseminated by every record depository in the country. A disaster drill would be conducted, with a determination that sufficient supplies are on hand for an emergency response.

Congress would be asked to give block grants to states to be used for emergency planning and training in how to preserve archival records. FEMA legislation would be amended to include vital and historical records as a responsibility. A placard to be used by persons making assessments of damaged sites could be nailed to the repository with assessment date, recovery recommendations, and contact information. A directory or database of vendors providing disaster recovery services would be maintained on line. And publications on disaster recovery would be reviewed to see if the information is current and relevant or "boilerplate."

In the Long Term, the team saw these needs. The archival [and RIM] professions must recognize and emphasize that duplication and off-site storage is the only preservation tool against a catastrophic disaster. Systematic imaging programs must be developed to protect essential records.

State archives, local governments and private record repositories could develop "buddy systems" with repositories far removed from their own location, storing copies of vital records for each other.

Disaster plans that are practical and current must become a high priority. Surveys show most plans contain essential information that is out of date. Priorities for salvage must be set well in advance, with a clear determination of what is essential.

State archival agencies should survey their states to know where historical records—public and private—are located. These sites should be plotted on a map, and information on key personnel must be kept current.

The profession should create a web site and a simple brochure for the public to identify essential records that must be retained and preserved. NARA should develop a mobile response/recovery laboratory which can be sent

immediately to a disaster site. When not being used for disaster recovery, this vehicle can be used for training and to raise awareness for archival efforts.

Lastly, NARA should have in place contracts with private companies that can dispatch freezer trucks to disasters as soon as possible.

The team's complete report is available on line at SAA's web site at www.archivists.org

SAA AND SSA CREATE DISASTER ASSISTANCE FUND

The Society of American Archivists and the Society of Southwest Archivists have created an Emergency Disaster Assistance Grant Fund. Any repository with archival records or special collections in Katrina-affected areas of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana or Mississippi can apply for a grant. More details and a short application form are on SAA's web site. Contributions to this fund are tax-deductible and can be made by check or credit card.

DISASTER PLANNING CAN WORK; HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES.

As reported by the New Orleans Times-Picayune on November 3, 2005, the Hancock County Historical Society in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi fared better than most repositories because Charles Harry Gray, the executive director, was prepared. Over the years he had been making copies of all the group's most treasured documents including 30,000 pictures, and not a single photograph or record was lost. Many copies were on computer disks and hard drives and others had been sent to the University of Southern Mississippi, two hours north of the coast.

The New Orleans Notarial Archives, holding all private-sector contracts back to the 1730s, had as part of its plan a prearranged contract with Munters Moisture Control Service, an international recovery firm near Chicago. The Notarial Archives was one of the first institutions to get access and begin rescue work. Wet records went into freezer trucks, other records went into climate-controlled trucks, and the trucks headed to Chicago for treatment. Not one page was lost of the 60,000 notarial volumes housed in the basement. The related Research Center received rain through broken windows but compact shelving, aluminum doors and flat cabinets protected their contents.

IS YOUR DISASTER PLAN UP TO DATE?

Can it be made better? Talk with your offsite storage contractor to learn more about protecting your valuable records. You may not live in hurricane territory, but storms, floods and fires know no boundaries.

Thoughts About Information

"All of the books in the world contain no more information than is broadcast as video in a single large American city in a single year. Not all bits have equal value."

Carl Sagan
US astronomer & popularizer
of astronomy (1934 - 1996)

"The IRS spends God knows how much of your tax money on these toll-free information hot lines staffed by IRS employees, whose idea of a dynamite tax tip is that you should print neatly. If you ask them a real tax question, such as how you can cheat, they're useless. So, for guidance, you want to look to big business. Big business never pays a nickel in taxes, according to Ralph Nader, who represents a big consumer organization that never pays a nickel in taxes..."

Dave Barry
"Sweating Out Taxes"
US columnist & humorist
(1947 -)"

"Data is not information, Information is not knowledge, Knowledge is not understanding, Understanding is not wisdom."

Cliff Stoll & Gary Schuber

"Non Judgment: In our world where it seems we are taught to judge everything all around and about us and we spend so much of our time doing just that, it might be wise to ask if we can judge anything. To judge anything with any degree of clarity and accuracy we would need all the information past, present and future and how it will affect all concerned to make a perfect judgment. Since no one has that skill, ability or

information, you might agree, it may be unwise to judge. This idea may be hard to accept, but when you look back over your life and the judgments you made, ask yourself. How many of your judgments, when you made them, were you perfectly sure they were correct, would you want to change now with the benefit of 20-20 hindsight? Since every judgment is only an opinion based on the limited information at hand, filtered through one's personal value system, it might be safe to assume no two people will judge anything exactly the same. Even concepts of right and wrong, good or bad, good or bad morals and ethics are only opinions, for what may be good in one case may be a disaster in another."

Sidney Madwed

"What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence, a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it."

Herbert Simon
Economist

Introducing BRM-Online

BRM has recently added a new web-based records management tool called **BRM-Online**. This new feature will provide clients with the ability to manage their account via the Internet, adding new and exciting features such as viewing signed printer receipts, work orders and invoices online!

BRM-Online will replace BRM's previous online management system, OSCAR.

The new tool provides a fast and easy way of placing orders, adding and editing inventory, reporting and exporting data, and managing account authorizations.



One of **BRM-Online's** most exciting new features is Scan on Demand. With Scan on Demand, documents stored at BRM can be digitally scanned and delivered to clients instantaneously. The electronic digital files are viewed through BRM-Online and transmitted directly to clients using a secure Internet connection. Demonstrations of BRM-Online are being held for clients who are interested in the new tool.

For more information about demonstrations on this new service, or to schedule training from your account manager, please contact the BRM customer support department at **412-321-0600**, or e-mail us at brmdetails@businessrecords.com.

Making a Difference at Holiday Time

In lieu of holiday presents or candy for our customers, each year BRM selects a charitable organization and makes a special holiday donation. For 2005, BRM donated \$1000 to *Toys for Tots*. The *Toys for Tots* mission is to generate toy and monetary donations during October, November and December each year and distribute holiday gifts to needy children in the community. This donation was made in honor of our customers. We thank you for a wonderful 2005, and we look forward to serving you in 2006!

Congratulations to our First Quarter Subscriber Winners!

First quarter newsletter subscriber winners receive two tickets to this season's PNC Pittsburgh Symphony Pops! Congratulations to Mr. Carl Bongiovanni of Bon Tool Company, who will receive tickets to the showing of "A Tribute to Cole Porter" and to Ms. Patty Fisher of Bordas & Bordas, who will receive tickets to the showing of "The Golden Age of Television!" On behalf of everyone at BRM, thanks again and we hope you have a great time!

BRM Employee Profiles



Cat Coughenour

Customer Support Specialist

Cat Coughenour began her career at BRM in November 2005. Cat's role of customer support specialist in the customer support department, includes serving as a liaison to BRM

clients. Cat's favorite part of the job is working alongside her co-workers and believes that her greatest contribution to BRM is a positive attitude. In her downtime, Cat enjoys listening to classic rock and alternative music and relaxing with friends and family to watch any sporting event. Shopping is also a favorite past time of Cat's, along with vacationing with her husband Derek in Montauk, New York.



Scott Kemmler

BRM Greentree Supervisor

Scott Kemmler has been part of the BRM family since September 1996. Scott's current position is supervisor of BRM's Green Tree facility, where he oversees daily operations.

He appreciates the family atmosphere of BRM and believes he creates a secure environment at the satellite facility. Outside of BRM, Scott views his biggest accomplishment as his marriage to wife Marcie and his son, Michael. When not hard at work, Scott enjoys listening to late eighties and hip-hop music or hitting the golf course. When vacation time rolls around, he enjoys visiting Myrtle Beach, North Carolina, which just so happens to be the golf capital of the world!

Brain Teasers

What Is Unusual?

This is an unusual paragraph. I'm curious how quickly you can find out what is so unusual about it? It looks so plain you would think nothing was wrong with it! In fact, nothing is wrong with it! It is unusual though. Study it, and think about it, but you still may not find anything odd. But if you work at it a bit, you might find out! Try to do so without any coaching!

(Answer: There are no "e's")

The king dies and two men both claim to be his long-lost son. One of the king's advisors proposes a test to determine the identity of the true heir. One claimant agrees to the test; the other refuses. The one who agreed is sent packing; the one who refused is identified as the rightful heir.

(Answer: The test is a blood test. The false son knows that these tests can be inaccurate so he agrees. The true son knows he is a hemophiliac and refuses to give blood.)

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"We back up our data on sticky notes because sticky notes never crash."

A black man dressed all in black, wearing a black mask, stands at a crossroads in a totally black-painted town. All of the streetlights in town are broken. There is no moon. A black-painted car without headlights drives straight toward him, but turns in time and doesn't hit him.

(Answer: It is daytime and the man is clearly visible)

A woman has incontrovertible proof in court that her husband was murdered by her sister. The judge declares, "This is the strangest case I've ever seen. Though it's a cut-and-dried case, this woman cannot be punished."

(Answer: The sisters are conjoined (Siamese) twins.)

What is greater than God, more evil than the devil, the poor have it, the rich can't get it and if you eat it, you die?

(Answer: Nothing.)

A man gave his young son the following challenge. He offered his son \$1000 if the son could accomplish the following task. The father gave his son ten envelopes and a thousand dollars, all in one dollar bills.

He told his son, "Place the money in the envelopes in such a manner that no matter what number of dollars I ask for, you can give me one or more of the envelopes, containing the exact amount I asked for without having to open any of the envelopes. If you can do this, you will keep the \$1000."

When the father asked for a sum of money, the son was able to give him envelopes containing the exact amount of money asked for. How did the son distribute the money among the ten envelopes?

(Answer: The contents of the ten envelopes (in dollar bills) should be as follows: \$ 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 489.)



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