

Alliance for Response Pittsburgh
Minutes, May 10, 2011

Attendees:

- Dev Albarelli, Point Park University
- Amy Baker, University of Pittsburgh
- Tracie Ballock, Duquesne University
- John Barnett, University of Pittsburgh
- Martha Berg, Rodef Shalom Congregation
- Tom Claeson, LYRASIS
- William Daw, University of Pittsburgh
- Elizabeth Evans, Point Park University
- Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh, Chatham University
- Jeanann Haas, University of Pittsburgh
- Bruce Johnston, Robert Morris University
- Miriam Meislik, University of Pittsburgh
- Jackie Mignogna, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
- Miranda Nixon, University of Pittsburgh
- Tara Walsh, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
- Grace Young, Chatham University

The Alliance for Response Pittsburgh initiative held its spring meeting and discussion at the library at Point Park University. We express our thanks to library director Elizabeth Evans for hosting and sponsoring the AFR meeting at Point Park.

There were two primary topics for discussion at the meeting—(1) the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Preservation Assistance Grant (PAG) awarded for the development of a disaster supply cache for the greater Pittsburgh region and (2) the development of a more defined organizational structure for AFR Pittsburgh as a way to encourage more involvement and accomplish more.

Disaster supply cache grant

John Barnett, University of Pittsburgh, and Tracie Ballock, Duquesne University, reported on current activities relating to the NEH Preservation Assistance Grant awarded in January 2010 to fund a disaster supply cache for the Pittsburgh region and to provide training in its use. PALCI, on behalf of AFR Pittsburgh, was awarded a \$6,000.00 grant for the period January 2011 through June 2012.

John noted that the grant was applied for and awarded to PALCI, as AFR Pittsburgh did not have the necessary organizational and administrative structure (e.g., a bank account, a DUNS number, et al.) to accept the grant. Now that John is no longer employed by PALCI, the PALCI Board has recommended that the grant be administered by someone affiliated with PALCI. Thus, Tracie Ballock has been selected as project director. Tracie has been very involved in disaster preparedness and response at her home institution, Duquesne, and through AFR Pittsburgh. Additionally, her library director, Laverna Saunders, has been involved in AFR Pittsburgh in the past and serves as PALCI board treasurer, which should facilitate payment of grant funds.

Tracie presented a list of possible supplies for purchase. The list was gathered from a number of sources, including the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) Mid-Atlantic Resource Guide for Disaster Planning and the San Diego/Imperial County Libraries Disaster Response Network (SILDERN), with additional contributions from Jonathan Henry, Jackie Mignogna, and Tracie Ballock. The attendees discussed the list. A number of persons (Amy Baker, Miranda Nixon, Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh, et al.) noted that the initial list submitted for the grant included a number of items that might not be appropriate for the level of disaster AFR Pittsburgh would be prepared to deal with. Several noted that in case of a disaster at their institution, for anything beyond a wet book disaster, such as fire, major flooding, and the like, they would be advised not to enter the building but instead would need to leave major disaster clean-up to other professionals.

The group agreed that scaling back the supply list to something equipped to handle a water damage situation for a collection might be more appropriate and realistic. Several attendees suggested where cuts could be made; others recommended items (such as fishing line and clothespins) to add to the list. Tracie will trim the supply list and share a revised version via the AFR Pittsburgh list. Once the list is finalized, a request for proposal will be developed and submitted to appropriate vendors for pricing and ordering.

John added that he would work with Tracie to develop a use policy for the supply list, basing the policy on mutual aid agreements from other organizations that have developed similar caches.

There was also significant discussion about the location for the disaster supply cache. Initially, PALCI and Jeanann Haas, University of Pittsburgh, had approached housing the cache at the University of Pittsburgh's Library Service Center, 7500 Thomas Boulevard, in the Point Breeze neighborhood. However, now that PALCI has begun the process of separating from Pitt, storing the items at Thomas Boulevard might be in question. John and Jeanann will investigate.

Others suggested now might be a good time to revisit other storage options, placing the materials in a location more central to the region and more accessible to non-Pitt employees.

There was additional discussion about what constituted the "greater Pittsburgh region." In the grant application, the region was defined as Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. It was discussed by the attendees that this may be a large enough region for now, but that, over time, we might consider extending the area served by the cache to encompass Pennsylvania Region 13, (<http://www.pa-region13.org/>), mirroring national and local disaster preparedness geography.

Organizational structure

Tom Clareson, LYRASIS, reported on the activities of two other AFR groups, Philadelphia-Area AFR and Savannah's HERA (Heritage Emergency Response Alliance), providing bylaws, mission statements, offices, and organizational information to show how AFR Pittsburgh might structure itself. Such an approach might encourage more people to be involved officially in the chapter and serve as a way to accomplish more—more programming, more activities, more members, etc.

Many agreed that this would be a good approach to involving more people (including, perhaps, more emergency responders) and accomplishing more goals and projects. The group discussed which offices and committees to create and how and when to hold elections.

John volunteered to review the documents and develop a list of offices and descriptions. Once done, he will share with the AFR Pittsburgh list. Those interested in running for office or serving on a committee will be encouraged to contact John. Elections will be held hopefully in June with the new office-holders and committees in effect soon afterwards.

Other activities and reports

Tom Clareson provided a fuller accounting of the Alliance for Response National Leadership Institute, held in Philadelphia in November 2010. Both Tom and John attended, learning a great deal about what other AFR groups across the nation are doing for regional disaster awareness and preparedness.

Tom also detailed meeting with Pam Weeks, State Citizen Corps Program Manager, from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). Tom and John had met her at the AFR National Leadership Institute in November. Pam also recently presented at the AFR Central PA meeting (May 2 at the Adams County Public Library in Gettysburg), where she provided an introduction to PEMA, information on Citizen Corps and its major programs, and how cultural heritage institutions such as libraries, museums, and historical societies can work with these initiatives.

Martha Berg, Archives, Rodef Shalom Congregation, reported that following AFR Pittsburgh's program at Rodef Shalom and environmental assessment of the archives, she was able to acquire secure shelving for archival collections.

Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh, Chatham University, reported that she had been working on a descriptive list of archival collections in the region, ones that provide or highlight collections about Pittsburgh. This might be a useful activity for AFR Pittsburgh to build upon because it is similar to what the AFR in the New York City region has done, creating quick information sheets on cultural heritage collections, which, in turn, have been shared with emergency responders. Rachel will provide a copy of the list to John.