

## **Alliance for Response Pittsburgh Gets Fired Up**

*Summary of September 9, 2009, Fire Suppression and Safety Workshop*

In fall 2009, Alliance for Response Pittsburgh presented a program on fire safety for cultural heritage organizations. The featured speaker was Nick Artim of the Heritage Protection Group, a Middlebury, Vermont-based collaborative of fire protection and security consultants and engineers that specializes in heritage protection. Artim is considered one of North America's preeminent experts in fire safety for cultural heritage.

The program was held at the historic Pittsburgh Athletic Association Club in the Oakland section of the city, home to the Carnegie Library, Carnegie Museums, the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, and a number of other cultural heritage agencies.

During the program, Artim described the general philosophy of fire safety for libraries, archives, museums, historic structures, and other cultural heritage agencies. Artim discussed a full range of fire safety issues, starting with basic fire chemistry, or how a fire starts and develops. He then related the typical fire risks that exist in cultural properties and how through fire prevention and risk reduction measures, the threat can be minimized.

The session continued with a discussion of fire safety features, including building fire compartmentation, fire detection and alarm systems, and fire suppression systems. A part of the session also covered fire safety during construction, making participants aware of how to reduce threats during this typically high hazard period.

The workshop attracted a variety of attendees, including at least one firefighter, a volunteer for a local dance theater, two facilities supervisors, and a records manager for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which maintains its retiree records in the Pittsburgh area.

The workshop was partially funded with a Federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant administered by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries and made available to Alliance for Response Pittsburgh with the assistance of the College and Research Division of the Pennsylvania Library Association (PaLA).

Additional funding and support were offered by BELFOR Property Restoration, Heritage Preservation, LYRASIS, PALCI: Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc., and the University of Pittsburgh University Library System. Since 2008, the Pittsburgh Alliance for Response has been supported in part by a grant from the Fidelity Foundation through Heritage Preservation, which is supporting Alliance initiatives in more than a dozen metropolitan areas across the nation.

Alliance for Response Pittsburgh plans to focus its spring 2010 programs on MayDay, as well as on examining the "anatomy of a response" to a disaster and how members might learn what to do and what not to do in a similar situation. The meeting is to be held on the afternoon of March 23 at the University of Pittsburgh Thomas Blvd. facility; more information about the session will be posted soon to the AFR-Pittsburgh discussion list and Web site.

For more information about AFR-Pittsburgh, please contact John Barnett, Assistant Director, PALCI, by email at [Barnett@palci.org](mailto:Barnett@palci.org) or by telephone at (412) 247-4130. You can also visit our website at [www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/Pittsburgh/index.html](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/Pittsburgh/index.html). To subscribe to the AFR Pittsburgh discussion list, please go to <http://list.pitt.edu/mailman/listinfo/afr-pittsburgh>.

*Submitted by John Barnett*