



## **Pittsburgh Alliance for Response Kick-off Forum**

June 4, 2008

Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The first in a new series of Alliance for Response Forums was held on June 4, 2008, at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. More than 60 representatives from the cultural and university communities, private sector, and local government took part. Local partners who helped to organize and support the Pittsburgh Forum included PALINET, the Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. (PALCI), Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the University of Pittsburgh Libraries, Preservation Technologies, L.P., Belfor USA, and the Munters Corporation.

In their welcoming remarks, Dr. Barbara K. Mistik, President and Director of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and Dr. JoAnne E. Burley, Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education, emphasized the urgency of taking steps to protect the city's rich cultural resources.

Two panels in the morning confirmed the value of collaborative efforts. Dr. Burley, George Mathews of Three Rivers Contingency Planning, and John Barnett of PALCI offered participants three different models for cooperative networks that strengthen emergency preparedness, communications, and response.

Raymond DeMichie, Deputy Director of the City of Pittsburgh Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, stressed the importance of opening a dialogue with emergency responders. He complimented the cultural community on its MayDay message, which he cited as a creative way to promote preparedness. Colleen Walz, Deputy Chief of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire, offered examples of how an institution's degree of preparedness directly affects the success of the response. She urged participants to share with the fire department as much information as possible about people, facilities, collections, and salvage priorities. She exhorted them to "plan, plan, revise, practice, and revise again!"

Afternoon sessions featured presentations on sustaining disaster recovery networks and finding local resources for planning and response. Local case studies from the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and B.F. Jones Memorial Library highlighted lessons learned when those institutions sustained major damage from storms.

Breakout session topics included disaster recovery, local disaster networks, and staff safety procedures. One overall theme emerging from the discussions was that every measure taken to prepare, no matter how small, will benefit an institution when an emergency occurs. Through their evaluation comments, participants declared the Pittsburgh Alliance for Response Forum a great success, especially noting practical advice that will lead to improvements in their own institutions.

Heritage Preservation sponsors the national Alliance for Response initiative with generous support from Fidelity Investments through the Fidelity Foundation. A new phase of Alliance for Response is underway in 2008, bringing forums to additional cities and strengthening local networks.