

## MAYDAY! MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

• ARCHIVES • HISTORIC PRESERVATION



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During the month of May Blue Shield Australia are encouraging archives, galleries, libraries, museums, cultural heritage sites and organisations across the country to participate in MayDay - a national campaign for the protection of cultural heritage from disaster.

MayDay aims to raise awareness about disaster preparedness and to encourage people to perform at least one disaster-preparedness task each May. There are many types of emergencies that we can be better prepared for, from the potential impact of faulty electrical wiring in the building next door, to bushfires, cyclones or even internal or external floods.

The MayDay concept originated with the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in 2006. Heritage Preservation (HP) partners with the SAA to promote MayDay and to provide some useful learning resources for American organisations.

The May/June 2007 issue of the SAA newsletter Archival Outlook contained an article titled 'MayDay Focuses on Emergency Preparedness' which described some of the activities undertaken by organisations across America for their annual MayDay campaign. Please see: [http://www.archivists.org/periodicals/ao\\_backissues/AO\\_May-June07.pdf](http://www.archivists.org/periodicals/ao_backissues/AO_May-June07.pdf). The article also welcomed the 'land Down Under' to the initiative in 2007.

### What is the Blue Shield?

The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. It is the symbol specified in the 1954 Hague Convention for marking cultural sites to give them protection from attack in the event of armed conflict. It is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters.

Blue Shield Committees around the globe comprise four international cultural heritage 'pillar' bodies -

International Council on Archives (ICA);

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS);

International Council of Museums (ICOM); and

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

In Australia, these pillar bodies are represented respectively as follows: Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA); Australia ICOMOS; ICOM Australia; Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

### MayDay Australia 2008

In 2007, Blue Shield Australia distributed fliers outlining what to do to prepare for a disaster. In 2008, they are going one step further, arranging a series of workshops to be delivered through the Australian Library and Information Association in partnership with CAVAL. Entitled 'Disaster Planning for Cultural Collections', the workshops will be presented by esteemed Conservator, Mr Kim Morris, between May

and September 2008 across six Australian cities. ALIA encourages practitioners from any field of cultural heritage to attend a workshop. Details about the workshops are available on the ALIA, CAVAL and Blue Shield Australia websites: <http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au>; <http://www.alia.org.au/events>; <http://www.caval.edu.au>.

Another new item on the flier for this year encourages checking of your organisation's 'business continuity' plan. This planning is generally undertaken by medium to large organisations to minimise the disruption to business from any surprise event.

For more information please see: <http://www.thebci.org.au/BCAW.htm>, or contact Mr Les Whittet on 02 62927822.

### What should I do?

In 2008, people in cultural heritage organisations are once again encouraged to print the MayDay 2008 flier and post it on a notice board before 1 May.

The flier is available at the following webpage: <http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/blue+shield+fourth+announcement+31+march+2008.aspx>

Then it's just a matter of acting upon one or more of the suggested activities. Here are some of the suggestions from this year's flier:

- Dust off your disaster plan and make sure it's up to date or make a timeline for developing one.
- Get to know your local firefighters and police, and invite them to tour your organisation and give you pointers on safety and preparedness.
- Identify the three biggest risks to your collection or heritage site.
- Meet with the people working in the other cultural organisations in your area and find out how you can share resources in the event of a disaster.
- Attend a 'Disaster Planning for Cultural Collections' workshop in your city between May and September.

For more information contact Veronica Bullock, Development Officer, Collections Council of Australia, at [blueshield@collectionscouncil.com.au](mailto:blueshield@collectionscouncil.com.au), or call (08) 8207 7287.

## Hot Topic for August

**Local government amalgamations - pain or gain for local and regional museums?**

**How do you rate your museum's experiences of local government amalgamation?**

**We will present some views on this topic, and invite our members to have their say.**

**Email the Editor at [editor@museumsaustralia.org.au](mailto:editor@museumsaustralia.org.au), with the subject line, Hot Topic LGA, before the end of June.**