


Customer Segment Story: LIBRARIES

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Since ancient times, with the famous loss of the world's largest archive of knowledge – the burning of the great Library of Alexandria – libraries have been at special risk to fire-related catastrophes. Disaster could strike at any time, destroying documents and archives in your library facility. It is often the responsibility of the local librarian to maintain a community's heritage and records. It is also the responsibility of these individuals to ensure that they have implemented effective procedures to minimize the affects of a disaster.

The Mid-Columbia Library District is a public library serving Benton, Franklin and portions of Adams Counties. Located in the sunny southeast corner of Washington State where the Yakima, Columbia and Snake Rivers meet, the twelve branches and the Administration/Technical Services Center provide friendly service to a diverse community, rich in agriculture, science and technology.

“Fire risk is the major threat to libraries and archives; and library protection should be managed accordingly.”

*– Library Security Guidelines,
American Library Association*

Catherine Russell, Librarian at Mid-Columbia, purchased four, 4-drawer fireproof cabinets from FireKing®. “I was mainly looking at the FireKing brand for reliability, size, and track record,” says Russell. In Washington State, libraries are government entities that are required to keep records for ten years. “We keep payroll, purchasing, accounts payable, any of the administration paperwork, anything that has to be kept in the public record basically. We keep all of our records in one of our branches in the administration section,” explains Russell.

Head Librarian of the Kaufman County (Texas) Library, Sue Webb, recently found a different reason to purchase a FireKing cabinet for her facility. Typically she keeps genealogy materials in the cabinet, things that can't be lost. The library hosts a group called The Past Finders Genealogy Club, which meets at the facility on the second Thursday of every month. “We've had one of the four-drawer models for just about a year,” she explains. Webb would recommend other libraries to take steps to secure their documents. “They're local old pictures that people have given us that can't be replaced. We make copies and put them out for the public to use and we keep the originals in the fireproof cabinet,” notes Webb.

The head librarian is typically responsible for purchasing fireproof enclosures for important library documents. According to Anna Aderman, Head Librarian of Assumption Public Library District of Christian County, IL, many libraries use fireproof file cabinets. Aderman purchased one last year, and has had others in the

past. She mostly uses the cabinets for genealogy as well. She found the product in an office supply catalogue. While the supplier delivered it to the building, she had to round up extra people to help get the cabinet where she wanted it. Her suggestion is to get as many strong arms as you can to help situate the heavy-duty units. Aderman keeps the cabinets out in the main library, locked, but patrons are welcome to access them with permission.

As more libraries begin to store data on CDs or on removable Zip drives, librarians will need to consider specially-designed containers called “Media Vaults” which are used to store and protect the digital records (CDs, Zip disks, diskettes, microfiche). For the storage of the vital records that are on-site, even if that is only a limited period of time, it is imperative to seek products that are tested by Underwriters Laboratories (UL®) or other nationally-known, independent testing labs. UL, in particular, is the best, as no other testing and standards organization matches their reputation. One solution is to purchase and deploy a FireKing MediaVault. This way, the digital media are 100% safe from the harmful affects of heat, as well as humidity, dust and magnetic fields.

According to the Library Security Guidelines document, jointly published by the American Library Association (ALA) and the Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA):

“The Library Director, or designee in safety and security matters, should be responsible for integrating a fire and emergency protection program into a library protection policy to avoid and mitigate losses to the library. Fire risk is the major threat to libraries and archives and library protection should be managed accordingly, following the guidance of National Fire Protection Administration (NFPA) National Standards, especially NFPA Standard 909 for the Protection of Cultural Resources, including museums, libraries, places of worship and historic properties, and subsequent revisions. Each state and city may have fire codes additional or slightly different from NFPA standards which can be easily verified with the local fire department.”

According to an ALA administrator, libraries have dealt with the storage of irreplaceable items forever. Every library has some number of documents that are unique or special that they need to keep extremely secure. The problem is not simple for these institutions, since libraries need to provide access to materials as well as protection. Librarians need a solution that is both secure and available. Fireproof cabinets, vaults, and safes from FireKing are excellent steps towards ensuring your community’s records, photos, and historical documents are properly protected.