

Disaster Management in Libraries: A Study

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Abstract

Disaster management is indispensable for the efficient functioning in libraries. Libraries are vulnerable to the wide range of disaster management. This paper highlights various types of disasters and natural calamities that can befall upon libraries. The disasters pose threat to library collection, equipment's, building and systems. Libraries are to play a vital role in preventing their collections and paraphernalia. Therefore meticulous disaster planning is inevitable for mitigating the hazardous effect of disaster on libraries. The paper also discusses how to plan, prepare, respond and recover from disasters.

Keywords: Disaster Management-Libraries; Disaster planning-Libraries; Disaster recovery-Libraries.

Introduction:

I.Kelman and S.Pooley(2004) describes the components/factors of disaster management.

The term disaster management has a wide scope as it includes natural disaster and man made disasters that are unleashed by man either intentionally or accidentally. Disaster can be of the type where the onset is slow like famines or the type where the onset is rapid like earthquake,flood. Natural disasters includes whether phenomenon such as floods,hurricanes,blizzards,storms,landslides,earthquakes, extreme of heat or cold,volcanic eruptions,tsunamis.human or man-made disaster include theft, criminal damage, fire, war/terrorism,building collapse,etc and other technical disaster like power cut, gas-leak,breakdown of computer network,communication failure,cooling/heating/ventilation system failure,etc.

The Government Of India Passed The Disaster Management Act,2005.The Bill enumerates the definition of “Disaster” as under-

“Disaster means a catastrophe, mishaps, calamity or grave occurrence affecting any area, arising from natural or man made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage too or degradation of environment and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.”(as cited in Modh,2010)

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What is disaster management?

Librarians, architects and record manager are becoming aware that, it is good collection management to think in term of ‘when’ and not ‘if’ disaster strikes. There also differentiating between the acute and dalmatian disaster of major fire as flood and the quiet and insidious disaster of deteriorating collections. The response to managing for either and acute or a quiet disaster is programme organize around the anticipation action and awareness. Managing from these stand point will enable staff in library situation to develop and optimum response to disaster that is having a plan and implementing a process where by the knowledge of staff can counter the unfortunate circumstance of disaster.

This article is intended to help design that optimum response by reviewing elements of disaster planning and by providing information on the reaction and recovery process that can be included in the libraries preservation survey, procedural handbook of disaster plan. The book cannot cover all aspects of emergency planning, nor refer to all the hazards that may be met in a library. Reaction to medical emergency is not covered, although obviously it is to a library's benefit to have staff trained in this area. Infestation of pest, especially the microorganism of mould, are discussed as the part of the action directed toward preservation and recovery of water-damage material. The book is designed to acquaint the keepers of our information store and cultural heritage with the necessity, advantages, time and potential expenditure required or prepared a comprehensive and effective disaster plan.

Disaster in libraries

Libraries are the centre of they act as repositories of cultural heritage. Heritages. Libraries collect, stock, process, organize, disseminate and distribute information/ knowledge recorded in documents, Libraries play a pivotal role in the educational process of formal and non-formal learning, in research and development, cultural activities, spiritual realms, recreation and entertainment. It would be no exaggeration to say that libraries act as a cornerstone of the cultural and civilizational edifice. Modern society is heading towards an information society in change of central instrument of change, force and direction of change are knowledge and information. Libraries of their books, journals and other learning materials enable the readers to partake of the wisdom and knowledge accumulated, treasured and enshrined in documents over the centuries. Access to existing knowledge and information is essential for research. Thus, libraries support and promote research, thereby contributing to the development of the nation's economy. Libraries cater to the recreational needs of the user. Libraries act as a heart of an academic institution supporting teaching and research. They provide an environment in which creativity is facilitated and fostered. They help preserve the wealth of knowledge.

Libraries are vulnerable to whole range of disasters. No library is entirely free from risk and disorders. Paul Eden and Graham Matthews (1996) have defined disaster keeping the importance of library in society as, 'any incident which threatens human safety and/or damage, or threatened to damage, a library building, collection (or items(s) therein) equipment and systems.'

They also indicate that a disaster occurs due to several natural or man-made factors-

- ~ Water (e.g., burst pipes or heavy rains leading to flooding).
- ~ Poor storage and environmental conditions. (e.g., dampness leading to mould growth).
- ~ Inadequate security leading to break-in and theft
- ~ Building deficiencies- poorly maintained buildings

Libraries have stacks of books, journals, reports, conference proceedings, rare materials and antiquities, equipment (computers, photocopiers), furniture which form an integral part of material, all of which as well as building is susceptible to disaster. Libraries are the heart of academic institutions and have the sources of information collection in a variety of formats which are required to be protected from disaster through disaster planning. In this new technological era, libraries have modernized and automated their operations and services. Libraries are adopting new technology, formats and contents to better meet service delivery mandates. Changes are accompanied by new risks to library operation and additional challenges to recovery to essential services after a major interruption. Libraries safeguard the tangible as well as intangible products of human intellect. But these repositories of information are amenable to natural process of deterioration. Some of the causes of natural deterioration include acidity of paper, copper corrosion of miniatures, chemical burning of leather, pest infestation, termite, etc. Libraries also face threat from computer viruses. Natural hazards such as earthquake, landslides, floods, storms, volcanoes, accidental fire and man-made disaster like theft, vandalism, mutilation, war, terrorism, etc. but libraries are at high risk. These disasters have come to pose a grave threat to the gain made by the development. Natural and man-made disaster in the past years decimating very richly equipped libraries resulting in the disfiguring and destruction of rare collections have reinforced the needs for libraries to be prepared to cope with disaster adequately in a bid to minimize the losses which occur in the wake of such a disaster. Libraries must play a

vital role to preserve a their collection and accessibility of information other also libraries have to maintain the fragile balance between preservation versus access. Libraries should take adequate major to prevent the eruption of disaster. Disaster in libraries can be maltigates or avoided altogether through meticulously elaborate disaster planning. Activities aimed at awaiting the occurrence of the constitute disaster management

Disaster planning

Disaster management encompasses activities directed towards meetings disastrous situation. It includes disasters control planning, risk assessment, training and finance necessary for its successful implementation. According to Lyall (1995) 'Disaster Plan' is, "a document which describes the procedures devised to prevent and prepare for disasters, and those proposed to respond to and recover from disaster when they occur. The responsibility for performing these tasks is allocated to various staff members ho comprise 'the disaster team'. Good disaster plan aims to prevent potential disasters, to minimize the impact, to enhance its capability in preventing, preparing and responding to disasters effectively and efficiently and to generate confidence among stakeholders,

The disasters management should be treated as a key area of library management. Library staff should be treated as a key area of library management. Library staff should be trained at regular intervals to combat any disaster. Disaster plan normally includes four stages-

- ~ Prevention
- ~ Preparedness
- ~ Reaction
- ~ Recovery

Disasters control plan should be a blue print for action, and preparedness should involve familiarization with all its aspects. The staff should be trained and they must be aware of the contents of the disasters plan and know their roles individually and it item. There should be appropriately maintained stores of equipment and material to deal with any unexpected ominous occurrence. Reaction stage involves that staff should know how to raise the alarm, whom to call in, how to identify material for appropriate treatment and how to protect undamaged material. Recovery phase includes activities such as arranging insurance assessment, treating materials, offering counselling to staff, providing a temporary services and restoring storage area and services to normal functioning.

Disaster Management of Libraries

Libraries should follow an effective disaster control plan. The plan should be periodically monitored and reviewed. Periodic full scale mock drill should be carried out. Library buildings, equipment, collections and computers should be completely insured. There should be good drainage and flood proof system. Library building should be build in such a way that it may be seismically safe. Regular checks of library building regarding water leakage should be carried out.

Library building and resources should be properly maintained and regular inspections of buildings and equipment should be conducted. Fire-extinguishers should be checked and stuff members should be trained in handling the equipment in case of emergency. The lay out of library building should be such that the ground floor does not have any valuable reading materials that could be lost in floods particularly where the area is prone to it. Basement should be avoided in the library building. Electrical installations should be fitted in a safe mode and single switch control should be installed. Stacks should be properly shelved and cleaned. Termite treatment should be done periodically in the library. Library building should be designed in such a way that when the earthquake strikes, minimum loss may occur. Mock drill should be carried out periodically not only check the equipment but also to give training to the library staff. The first priority in case of any disaster should be human safety. Disaster control plan should incorporate a list of al the members of the disaster team, clearly stating their responsibilities during all phases of a disaster. The frequency with which this task needs to be carried out should also be specified. Committed and dedicated staff members are necessary for coordinating the activities of disaster plan and making it successful.

Digitization is an important means of preservation for priceless heritage and cultural materials. Digital archiving is indispensable. Archiving materials implies standards and formats that will never decay and is often an active process of continual migration. Metadata standards such as EAD (encoding archival description) for finding guides and EACs(encoding archival content form the backbone pf archiving of digital resource files and are instrumental in validating digital archives.

Conclusion

This paper reveals that the libraries are aware about the various types of disasters.

Disaster control plan for disaster management is not only indispensable but also of paramount importance. Necessary infrastructure for disaster management should be created and emergency response mechanism should be put in place and upgraded if required. Educating people and generating awareness among them regarding disaster management is of crucial nature and has immense significance. Different type of libraries should collaborate with each other and national library should take a lead role in preparing a mode for disaster planning. Libraries can share or pool their institutional resources in order to rescue from disasters. Library cooperation in disaster management can be ensued in different was like joint training programme, procuring and storage of emergency equipment,etc. The government bodies and professional about disaster management through reading materials ad training programme.finally the major problems militating against effective disaster control management in the library.

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