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Disaster Preparedness at the State Public Library, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Introduction

There are many kind of libraries for different purpose. Unlike the other types of libraries that are meant for specific group of users, public libraries are not restricted to any group of users. They are more or less a universal library; as some perceive them as the "poor people's university"; expected to serve all kinds of people including young children, the physically challenged and those who, for one reason or the other, are incapacitated, such as the hospital patients and the prisoners. Public libraries serve the general needs of cities, towns, villages and some larger areas and are saddled with the responsibilities of serving the entire group of users of a community where they are located, regardless of age, sex, religion, complexion and profession.

When the librarian accepts holdings into his repository, it implies taking the responsibility for their custody. All this may be jeopardized, if the library is damaged or lost as a result of a disaster. Viewed from the point of view of the library, a disaster can be anything or event which directly or indirectly affects the normal administration of the library i. e. the disruption of services to readers on

either a short-time or a long-time basis. This is different from the normal nature of events that are termed or described as disasters. Natural events like earthquakes, flood, and volcanic eruption are termed disaster because of the effects they have on human beings as well as their normal way of occurrence. Also, man-made events like fire, acts of war and terrorism, structural (building) deficiencies and chemical spills are termed disaster; because of their effects on materials and properties of the library. However, criminal acts, like book theft and mutilation are also termed as physical disasters.

It can be argued that the classification of disasters into natural and man-made has very little importance for the identification of what actually is a disaster. Thus, an event becomes a disaster, only when man and the environment he has created or lived in, are affected; whereby the environment can be a nation, community, business organization, office, museum, or library. The moment these settings are disturbed and normal services are disrupted, the situation can be termed as a disaster. Hence, a disaster as an unexpected consequences to the holdings or materials in the custody of the librarians stressing that it can be a small-scale incident or a full-blown emergency; even though in both cases, the event or situation requires prompt action to limit damages.

Alegbeleye (1993) defined disaster as an event that "results in the sudden removal of records and documents from accessibility and use"; stating further that the disaster can be regarded as an occurrence that temporarily or permanently render information contained in document inaccessible. A disaster can be seen as an overwhelming ecological disruption occurring on scale sufficient to require outside assistance. Indeed, disasters are exceptional events which suddenly kill or injure large number of people and damage properties. Looking at disaster in a generic information management context, it can be viewed as any incident which threatens human safety; and/or damages or threatens to damage a library's buildings collection (or items therein), equipment and system.

There are varied causes and for that matter classification of disaster. Alegbeleye (1993) agreed that the simplest and most common are the grouping into natural and man-made categories. They stated further that natural disasters are happenings, over which man has very little or no control and are generally initiated by such events as floods, earthquakes, storms, cyclones and hurricanes; among others. Man- induced disasters include war-time destruction, bombings, rioting, malicious vandalism, arson, negligence, power surges and failures. Irrespective of sources of disasters, the destruction and devastation they cause or threaten to cause to library resources and the provision of library services remain a critical factor in the management of libraries.

Alegbeleye (1993) also mentioned two commonly recurring causes of library disasters to include floods and fires. Anderson and McIntyre (1985) however added vandalism, theft, earthquake, insect infection and the effect of light and temperature to the list of causes of disasters in libraries. Ngulube (2005) noted that although humankind tend to associate the term 'disaster' with devastating floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and other catastrophes, risks and hazards to documentary materials, which include insects and rodents, mould and humidity, tornadoes, forest fire, volcanic eruption etc. can occur anytime without notice.

Meanwhile, a disaster plan, according to Lyall (1993), is a document which describes the procedures devised to prevent and prepare for disasters, and those proposed to respond to and recover from disasters when they occur. The responsibility for performing these tasks is allocated to various staff members who comprise 'the disaster team'. The plan should be comprehensive enough to consist several independent yet interrelated smaller plans, recognizing that every disaster has three phases; before, during and after. A number of plans is required to cope with each of the phases namely: 'before phase', should encompass two types of plan viz: preventive and preparedness; implying everyday routine operations. Whereas preventive plans recommend actions to prevent most disasters; such as the repair of leaking roofs, the improvement of maintenance and the upgrading of

security, preparedness plans aimed at ensuring that identified disasters can be managed recommending actions such as the identification of important items in the collection, the purchase of plastic sheeting, the provision of freezing facilities and the training of staff to enable them to respond to different disasters. The 'during phase' requires a response to the disaster; the effectiveness of which is hinged on the thoroughness of the preparedness plan. The 'after phase' is where the recovery plans are implemented; though not in details; given the unique nature of every disaster.

In each of the preventive, preparedness, response and recovery plans, priority attention should be given to possible areas to be affected by the disaster. These areas are:

1. personnel including staff, users and visitors
2. collections and records including all categories of archival records, serials, monographs, manuscripts, maps, sound recordings, computer discs, optical and video discs, pictorial materials, and their related catalogues.
3. It is also important to consider the protection of the institution's vital records. These are usually considered to be those records without which the institution could not operate. All legal documents, essential files and financial records are included in this category
4. building and equipment including equipment, vehicles, air conditioning plant, plumbing, electrical services and computers (Lyall, 1993).

The desired that the plan be prepared by a team and not an individual is due to the fact that such a plan must naturally apply to the building and all its contents, including people, collections, records and equipment. Thus, preparing the plan involves five main steps viz:

1. conducting a risk analysis
2. identification of existing preventive and preparedness procedures
3. making recommendations to implement additional preventive and preparedness procedures
4. allocating responsibilities
5. devising procedures to respond to and recover from disasters (Lyall, 1993).

On their part, Newey, Lepschi & Croft (2008) identified the objectives of the disaster plan as including to:

1. minimise damage to the collections;
2. recover and repair any damaged collection materials; and
3. return the library and archival services to normal.

These objectives are facilitated by the plan through provision of a framework and guidelines for the following:

1. rapid and effective response to an emergency;
2. good communication;
3. ensuring staff are well trained;
4. ensuring appropriate equipment and materials are available; and
5. enabling assistance from outside organisations. Historical Background of Kwara State Public Library, Ilorin

After the creation of Kwara State along with others in 1967, the need for a public library service in it became pressing. The Northern regional library, Kaduna was decentralized for the new States to establish their own. The area court building was chosen as a suitable place that could accommodate the new library, before it moved to its location in October 1967. Apart from the inherited library materials from the defunct northern region, a total sum of 300 pounds was released to the

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Interim Administrative Council to purchase more books for the library. On 1 April 1968, the Kwara State Library commenced services to the public after which it was realized that the borrowed building was quite unsuitable due to its closeness to the central market. The problem of accommodation persisted for two decades during which the library moved from one building to the other. The lack of a befitting infrastructure was a setback to the library and frantic efforts were made by many to secure a suitable and permanent building for the library. In November 1987, the then military Governor, Lt. Col. Ahmed Abdullahi laid the foundation of a purposefully-built library where it presently occupies. The completed building was commissioned by the then military president, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida on 21st November 1990. Between 1990 and 2001, the teeming reading population in the State made use of the library. Within a decade and half, the building got dilapidated, its stock became out-dated and irrelevant to the information needs of users. On assumption of duty as Governor, Dr. Bukola Saraki visited the dilapidated library and promised it a face-lift. Renovation started on 23rd November, 2005. The transformed library building was commissioned and put back to use 1st July 2006 (Kwara State Library Handbook, 2006). Like other libraries, it comprises the Administrative, Technical Services and Reader Services, Acquisitions, Cataloguing/Classification, Circulation, Reference, Automation, Children and Serials divisions as well as an Internet café. Electronic resources are available through dedicated websites for the library while it uses ALICE for windows for its automation and an electronic device system for the security of its collection. The library was established primarily to serve as local center of information that will make all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its numerous users irrespective of their age, sex, race, religion, nationality, language or social status. However, there is no total claim to it that the library has fulfilled these service provision obligations to its numerous patrons.

Statement of the Problem

Many archives and libraries fail to recognize the vulnerability of their collections to loss. Collections can be threatened not just by theft and vandalism, but by disasters such as fire, flood, tornado, hurricane and earthquake as well as damage from careless handling or poor environmental conditions. Thus, any repository seeking to provide the best possible security for its collections must put in place coordinated policies that address all of these threats. Providing the best protection for building and collections from the most common causes of loss is a basic principle of preventive maintenance. Public libraries experienced difficulty in building good, adequate and relevant materials even in the best of economic climes. The issue of disaster management cannot be more relevant in our libraries, especially the public libraries, than now; that their budgetary allocations have dwindled substantially in the face of the global economic turn-down. Thus, it has been observed that many libraries in Nigeria, especially the public libraries, have little or no regards for disaster preparedness. Despite the fact that these libraries recognized the need to protect their holdings, it is assumed that proper measures are not in place against such occurrence, which could serve to ameliorate the devastating consequences of disasters. This study therefore investigated the causes and management of both man-made and natural disasters that could threaten the preservation of the library collections using the Kwara State Library, Ilorin as a case in point. The broad objective of the study is to examine the possible causes and prevention of disaster in the Library and its preparedness towards ameliorating its consequences, when it occurs inevitably.

Research Questions

The study sets out to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the possible causes of disasters at the Kwara State Public

Library, Ilorin?

2. What disaster prevention plans and measures does the library have?
3. What other plans/measures has the library for the preservation of its materials?
4. What amount of the library's budgetary allocation is meant for disaster planning?
5. What are the problems militating adequate disaster preparedness in the library?

History of Disasters

It is very important to provide an historical perspective on disasters in the context of this study. The great library at Alexandra established in the third century BC, was destroyed by fire first in 47 BC, during the time of Julius Caesar and then finally in 373 AD. (Ngulube, 2004). The 1966 Florence flood destroyed 2 million volumes of cultural objects in the Bibliotheca Nazionale Centrale (Feather, 1991). The Public Records Office of Ireland was burnt down during the 1992 civil war leading to the loss of Irish Cultural Heritage from the Middle Age to 1790. (Bohem, 1996). In November 1998, a tornado swept through Colombia destroying some records of the University of Missouri (Morris, 2000). In 1999, the invading force of Slobodan Milosevic systematically destroyed records pertaining to land, financial, citizenship and genealogical entitlements of the Albanian community in Kosovo (Ngulube, 2005). On September 11, 2001, terrorists bombed the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon libraries in the United States of America, destroying records, books and other documentary materials (Buchanan, 2002). The National Library and Archives, a priceless treasure of Ottoman historical document including the Royal Archives of Iraq, were turned to ashes in 3,000 degrees of heat on 14th April, 2003 during the United State's invasion of Iraq (Buchanan, 2003). Fire caused extensive damage to records of the Secretarial Office in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1939, destroying a vital portion of the central government records. . Valuable records relating to one of the major cities in Africa were destroyed. In Pujchum town in Sierra Leone, 250,000 governments records were lost to fire in 1991 just as a hurricane destroyed valuable records and private manuscripts at the National Archives of Swaziland in 1984 (Alegbeleye, 1993). The Pretoria City Council in South Africa lost a range of records dating back to the 1920s in a fire at its Munitoria building in March 1997 (Directorate, State Archives and Heraldic Services, 1998-1999) even as flash floods hit Mozambique's districts of Xai-Xai, Chokwe and Guija during the year 2000. These were the worst floods since 1850. Some documents were swept away and some were destroyed. Rental documents and pensions records were lost, such a lost obviously compromises good governance, transparency and the ability to establish a just society. The devastating fire at Norwich City Library in 1994, showed how vulnerable collections are the great loss that can result. Fire severally damaged the Cabildo in New Orleans in 1988; the Loma Prieta earthquake damaged several San-Francisco's area museums and libraries in 1989; smoke from an electrical fire covered collections throughout the Huntington Gallery in 1985 and mould threat on Mount Vernon's archival collections. Though it has been observed that West Africa seems to be relatively free from disaster, Alegbeleye (1993) highlighted prominent disasters within the West African region to include the fire at the library of the Nigeria Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Jos; the 1988 arson by students, which destroyed books in the Nigeria Forestry Research Institute Library and the destruction of documents in the National Library of Nigeria in 1990. Similarly, records indicate that Ghana has experienced a series of floods, earthquake, fire and arson related disasters over the years (Pepra, 1998 and Adinku, 2005). Some of which include the earthquake of 1939, which destroyed the Aglion Library; the 1984 Agricultural Development Bank Head Office fire, which resulted in the loss of valuable records and the fire outbreak at the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation in 1989 which destroyed the films, archives and the library. Conclusively, large or small, natural or man-made disaster or emergencies

put an institution's staff and collections in danger.

Possible Threats to Library and its Resources

The greatest threats to the collections are considered to be from fire and water. Physical damage is considered to be less likely. However a worst-case scenario could involve all three hazards occurring simultaneously. Staff should be mindful of any signs of problems arising in these areas.

Fire

Fire could originate from either external or internal sources. External sources include the risk of bush fire and lightning strikes. Internal risks of fire are ever-present with our widespread reliance on the use of electrical appliances, such as desk lamps, heaters, computers, power boards and other equipment within the collection buildings. Other possible sources of fire could include chemical spills.

Water

Water hazards can originate from either external or internal sources. External sources include storms that could cause water leaks in the building or localized external flooding that seeps into the building. Storms could also cause structural damage to the building that could provide a point of entry for water. The most likely external sources of water damage from external sources are considered to be from the roof when gutters are clogged with litter debris, when structural damage has occurred or flooding in the basement area, when excessive run-off cannot be handled by the outside storm water drains. This site needs to be monitored in periods of heavy rain. Internal sources of water damage include leaks or accidental discharge from internal plumbing such as from the internal sprinklers, fire hoses, burst water pipes and overflowing sinks.

Physical Damage

Physical damage to the collection could arise from damage to the building (e. g. structural failure or storm damage) resulting in damage to the collection, or from unauthorized entry leading to theft or vandalism of Collection materials. Maintenance arrangements for all large trees in proximity to the buildings minimizes the chance of damage to the building from a tree falling on it during a storm. Security arrangements at both sites minimize the risk of the unauthorized access. However it should be noted that security arrangements are not fail-safe. Systems failure is always a possibility and people should be cautious of unauthorized people There also is the potential for the security system to fail if it is impaired in some way associated with the disaster.

Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plan

The natural disaster is likely to happen anytime and cannot be prevented; but measures could be taken to eliminate or reduce the possibility regardless of the many forms that a disaster may take. The actual damage to collections is usually caused by fire or water, which fall under the categories of man-made disasters. Even when they are not the initial factors, fires and floods almost invariably occur as secondary causes of disasters in libraries. Karen (2009) stated that though an emergency does not have to become a full-fledged disaster, many institutional staff often learn the advantages of emergency preparedness through hard experience. He stressed that hazards can often be mitigated or avoided altogether by a comprehensive, systematic, emergency-preparedness program; which provides a means for recognizing and preventing risks and for responding effectively to emergencies. Morgan and Smith (1997) noted that library resources are very valuable either for the information they contain or for their physical beauty. The materials are meant to be a source of knowledge, pleasure and

assistance for generations to come. They stated further that the libraries house and preserve materials, which by their very nature, are very susceptible to disasters; as materials could be completely lost or national asserts in information resources easily lost in a disaster. A nation stands to lose greatly if there are no arrangement to prevent or mitigate the consequence of disaster. The disaster problem is further emphasized by Mathew (2005) who asserted that surveys have shown that disasters in libraries are almost inevitable. Ngulube (2005) stated that disaster preparedness and security are vital to the preservation and protection of records and library. According to him, disaster planning facilitates efficient and quick response to an emergency and security protects items against theft or deliberate or unintentionally damage and destruction. Lyall (1993) stated that disaster plan is a document, describing the procedures devised to prevent and prepare for disasters and those proposed to respond to and recover from disasters when they occur. England and Evans (2007) noted that disasters strike too many libraries, finding them unprepared for action. Aina (2004) stated that it is necessary for the library to have in place plans that would mitigate the effects of a disaster. For example, in case of fire disaster, there should be an abundance of fire extinguishers at appropriate places in the library and staff should be trained on how to handle them in putting out the fire. He stressed that it might also be necessary for a library to insure its holdings against such risks as fire, flood and earth-quake. Beth (2008) noted that an increasing number of professionals know that small-scale emergencies could be contained if staff members are prepared to react quickly; even as damage can be limited even in the face of a large-scale disaster. He cited the example of cultural institutions in Carlson, South Carolina, which formed a consortium focusing on disaster preparedness several years before they were hit by hurricane Hugo in 1989. According to him, many of those institutions sustained only minor damage because they were able to put their early warning procedure into operation. There is no doubt that disaster planning is complex and that the written plan is the result of a wide range of preliminary activities. However, the entire process is most efficient if it is formally assigned to one person, who acts as the disaster planner for the institution and is perhaps assisted by a planning team/committee. The Institution's Director may play this role or delegate the responsibility, but it is important to remember that the process is supported at the organization's highest level, for it to be effective. The planner should establish a timetable for the project and define the scope and goals of the plan, which will depend largely on the risks faced by the Institution. When a member of the main library staff encounters an emergency, the first response should always be to contact the library's security office. When an emergency occurs, the staff will either contact public safety directly or the library's security office, depending on the nature of the emergency. When the libraries are closed, disaster will be detected from the outside; in which case, public safety will notify appropriate library staff, since it maintains a list of emergency contact personnel from the libraries.

Library Preparedness against Disasters

According to Newey, Lepschi & Croft (2008) Preparedness involves:

1. identification of a disaster response team;
2. training of an emergency action team;
3. identification of recovery work areas; and
4. ensuring supply of equipment and materials.

When appropriate, libraries security staff should take steps to limit potential damage while waiting for emergency personnel (public safety or physical plant) to arrive. Such steps include making sure that patrons and staff are not in danger. Safety of human beings comes before protection of library materials. Libraries' security staff themselves should not take unwarranted risks to save library materials. Eliminating the source of the problem is also an important step to take in an emergency. Libraries security staff are trained to use fire extinguishers to put

out the fire, if possible. In the event of water damage, libraries' security staff will attempt to cut off the water supply to the affected area. The next step is to get materials out of danger. If the number of materials threatened by water is small, they can simply be moved to a dry place. For large problems, plastic sheeting can be spread over the stacks to shield them from water coming from above. No clean up or salvage work should be attempted until the situation is stable and a damage assessment has been made. It is better to be prepared in readiness for disasters that could occur in the library. Perhaps, the greatest threats to library collections are considered to be from fire and water, as physical damages such as earthquake, hurricane and tornado are not as common. However a worst-case scenario could involve all three hazards occurring simultaneously. It is therefore important that library staff should be vigilant and mindful of any signs of problems arising in these areas.

Justification of the Study

Preparing for a disaster can reduce the fear, anxiety and losses that it can cause. A disaster can be a natural disaster, like a hurricane, tornado, flood or earthquake. It might also be man-made, like a bioterrorist attack or chemical spill. Disaster planning or preparedness is becoming an essential component of the overall management plan for libraries and archives. The importance of an effective disaster plan is regularly demonstrated in institutions which are strongly committed to their plans. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" remains a valuable aphorism for disaster prevention (Tennant, 2001). Everything that can be reasonably done to avoid or lessen the impact of disasters by planning ahead of time is certainly well worth the time, effort, and resources. Many disasters can be avoided–or at least their impact minimized–by taking the time to plan ahead. Since disasters are real and could happen anytime, therefore, all these factors militating against library materials required effective management of library materials against disasters. This will be quite beneficial especially to the public libraries considering its myriads of incapacitating challenges, which have rendered them largely unrecognized when compared with the other types of libraries. Thus, this study's justification.

Research Methodology

Due to the nature of this research project, case study research design was adopted, while the main instrument used for data collection was the interview, complemented with observation. An interview session was arranged with the Head of Technical Section of the Library involving a face-to-face interaction, where pertinent questions regarding the subject of research were asked directly and the interviewee gave self response. . An interview schedule comprising a total of 14 questions derived from the Research Questions earlier on stated. The observation is a checklist or enquiry of all possible behavior that occur during an event in a particular situation. This enables the researchers to participate directly in data collection exercise. Also, a day close observation was conducted by the researchers, where the library building, materials and security operatives were closely observed. The descriptive method was used in providing the report of the interview

Findings of the Study

Reports of the Interview and the Observations

On what could be responsible for the occurrence of disasters and possible ways of controlling them, the response indicated that biological agents such as earthquake, floods, fires and leakage of roofs are some of these. She stated further that the way the library was sited, its obviously solid structure, well-channeled drainages

and good erosion-controlled environment/premises, served as control against floods; while the wiring was done to safety standards. Thus, it is assumed that the library's construction was done in compliance with all local fire, electrical, plumbing, heating, and construction codes. Beyond this however, it was gathered that the library has no disaster planner team or committee in place; thus the library was expected to attend to disasters as they occur, instead of monitoring and reviewing the situation regularly in anticipation of possible occurrence of disasters so as to ensure adequate preparedness. The library is said to have no budgetary plans in preparation against disasters due to inadequate funding; which reflects the general abject financial status of public libraries in Nigeria. To this end, observations revealed that there are no disaster management experts on ground in the library as members of staff have little or no considerations for possibility of occurrence of disasters. It was gathered that apart from the general alarm that is meant to announce and alert occupants of the library in an event of disasters, there are no such essential disaster detection and prevention devices as smoke/fire detector, water sensing alarm etc. this presumes that there could not have been the equally essential periodic evaluation of the fire prevention system in use. The only visible preparation against fire disaster was the ample provision of fire extinguisher at every strategic place; precisely on every floor of the library's two storey building. Though the library staff are said to be trained on how to use fire extinguisher to suppress fire in case of a fire emergency, there was no way to verify the state of the fire extinguishers just as the ability of the library staff to handle them effectively for the purpose meant could not be confirmed. Observation also revealed that there are no posters within the library/its premises prohibiting smoking by users and staff in the library as well as in the records storage areas respectively. Also observed was the absence of clearly marked fire escape routes and exits; even as no evidence of regularly-held fire drills to practice emergency procedures existsBeyond the good construction of the library as a measure against flooding, observation also revealed that the library does not store its collections in basements, under water pipes, or directly on the floor. This is a good preventive step against possible flooding even though that this does not overrule the possibility of flooding completely; hence the need to look for any potential water hazards during routine inspections of the plumbing, drains and water pipes. Also significant for this report is that the library does not install carpet in records storage areas. This is also a good preventive measure because, if flooding occurs, the carpeting will retain water and prevent drainage as well as create a problem in stabilizing temperature and relative humidity in the affected area.

Conclusion

Considering the significance of library collections to the overall success of the library's missions of effective services delivery, the preservation of these materials as well as the library building itself is quite imperative. This becomes even more so in the face of global economic recession being experienced today, which compounds the already worse financial situation of the public libraries in Nigeria. This calls for concerted efforts on the part of the library authorities to get prepared for disasters, which can happen at any time and unexpectedly too. This is because the consequences of disasters occurrence in the public library will be devastating, if not completely annihilating. So, the findings of this study which pointed to the fact that disasters preparedness plans are essentially non-existing in the Kwara State Library is, to say the least, undesirable, calling for urgent attention by all its stakeholders.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study and the conclusion reached above, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. The library should constitute a disaster management team/committee, which

will not only serve as disaster monitor within the library but also as a liaison between the library and the agencies concerned with disaster management in the community so as to be in constant touch.

2. The fire extinguishers should be checked at regular intervals, while the agency staff should be shown where to locate them and demonstrate how to use them.

3. The library should mark, clearly, fire escape routes and exits and also hold regular fire drills to practice emergency procedures.
4. There is the need for the library to install fire detector, water sensing alarm and more fire extinguishers as well as regular maintenance of drainage and plumbing system. There should be a regular building inspection so as to remedy the factors which constitute potential hazards.
5. The library should have comprehensive insurance scheme over the library and its contents so as to reduce and share the possible risk of lose.
6. Take special precautions during usual period of increased risk such as building renovation.
7. The public library funding agency/parent institution should provide more funds to the library being an essential component of the community while prudent management of available resources is required from the library authorities in return.

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