

ayushi International Interdisciplinary Research Journal

Peer Review and Indexed Monthly Journal

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SPECIAL ISSUE

on

“साहित्य संस्कृती आणि सामाजिक शास्त्रे
यातील समकालीन विचार व समस्या ”

Feb. 2024

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Aayushi International Interdisciplinary Research Journal (AIIRJ)

Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal

ISSN 2349-638x

Impact Factor 8.02

Website :- www.aiirjournal.com



Special Issue No.133

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Disaster Management in Libraries: An Overview

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Abstract

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

Keywords: Disaster Planning, libraries; Disaster Management-Libraries.

Introduction

Disaster causes a catastrophic loss of life and property in a society which may be caused by nature or man-made situations. It is a calamitous occurrence which is triggered either by fury of nature or by human folly which results into widespread damage, destruction, ecological disruption, loss of human life, human suffering, deterioration of health and health services on a scale sufficient to warrant an extraordinary response from outside the affected community or area to mitigate and alleviate the intensity of sufferings of the victims. Disasters may vary from termite to tsunami. Disasters are not uncommon events and take many forms. Disasters can strike anywhere, any time and play havoc with mankind, inflicting irreparable damage to the rhythm of life, leaving behind the trail of huge devastation and scars of heart-rending agony, destitution and desolation. Disasters snap the well-knit fabric of life and tear it asunder, forcing the victims to lead a life of cries and sighs, privation and deprivation with their abilities to function considerably impaired and mutilated

The Govt. of India passed the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Bill enumerates the definition of 'Disaster' as under- a life with their abilities to function considerably impaired and mutilated

The Govt. of India passed the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Bill enumerates the definition of 'Disaster' as under-

"Disaster means a catastrophe, mishap, 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 to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, 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)

The term disaster has a wide scope as it includes natural disasters and man-made disasters that are unleashed by man either intentionally or accidentally. Disasters can be of the rapid like earthquake, floods, etc. Natural disasters include weather phenomena such as floods, eruptions, blizzards, storms, landslides earthquakes, extremes of heat or cold, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis Human or man-made disasters include theft, criminal damage, fire, technical, disasters like power cuts, gas leaks, breakdown of computer networks, communication failure, cooling ventilation systems failure etc.

Disaster in Libraries

Libraries are the center of learning. They act as repositories of cultural heritage. 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 which the central instruments of change, force and direction of change are knowledge and information. Libraries through 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 a nation's economy. Libraries cater to the recreational needs of the users. Libraries act as the 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 which symbolizes the onward march of mankind on the path of progress and enlightenment from the stage of primitivism to modernism.

Libraries and information centers are vulnerable to the whole range of disasters. No library is entirely free from risks 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 damages, or threatens, to damage, a library's buildings, collections (or item(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 (eg. dampness leading to mould growth)
- Inadequate security leading to break-in and theft
- Building deficiencies poorly maintained buildings

Libraries have stack of books, journals, reports, conference-proceedings, rare materials and antiquities, equipment (computer, photocopiers), furniture which form an integral part of library's 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 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 operations and additional challenges to recovery of 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 include acidity of paper, copper corrosion of miniatures, chemical burning of leather, pest infestation, termite etc., Libraries face threat from computer viruses

Apart from these inevitable causes of decay, natural hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, floods, storms, volcanoes, accidental fires and made disasters like theft. Vandalism, mutilation, war, terrorism, neglect etc. put libraries at high risk. These disasters have come to pose a grave threat to the gains made by the development. Horrendous natural and man-made disasters in the past years decimating very richly equipped libraries resulting in the disfiguring and destruction of rare collections have reinforced the need for libraries to be prepared to cope with disasters adequately in a bid to minimize the loss which occurs in the wake of such a disaster. Libraries and information centers must play a vital role to preserve their collection and accessibility of information. Otherwise also libraries have to maintain the fragile balance between preservation versus access, Libraries should take adequate measures to prevent the eruption of disasters. Hazards or disasters in libraries can be mitigated or avoided altogether through meticulously elaborate disaster planning. Activities aimed at averting the occurrence of the disaster constitute disaster management. For example, fires can engulf a library altogether, leaving no traces behind. So disaster plan is essential for libraries to identify the risk factors pertaining to their areas and formulate a disaster plan to deal with any unforeseen eventuality.

Disaster Planning

Disaster management encompasses activities directed towards meeting disastrous situations. It includes disaster 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 disasters when they occur. The responsibility for performing these tasks is allocated to various staff members who 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.

Particularly where the area is prone to it basement should be avoided in the library should & Electrical installations should fitted in a safe mode and single switch control should be installed. Stacks should be property shelved and cleaned. Termite treatment should be periodically done in the library. Library building should be in such a way that when the earthquake strikes, minimum possible loss may occur. Mock drills should be carried out periodically not only to 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 all 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 of archiving of digital resource files, and are instrumental in validating digital archives.

Cautions and preparedness

It is a fact that librarians and the authorities of various organization's need to know the importance of disaster management planning so that the resources can be saved from any disaster to maintain the continuity in the services and also saving humanity. Some of the precautions and Preparedness can be taken into consideration in respective environments depending on the intensity and scale. Some of them are listed below:

- Insurance of Building Equipment's, Collections, Computers
- Good drainage and flood proofing system
- Maintenance of building and resources
- Training and awareness
- Carrying out risk assessments
- Regular inspections of building and equipment
- Identifying and using reliable expert advice
- Planning for continuity service and storage
- Periodic review of the disaster control plan
- Fire safety measures
- Household items which need hazardous items which need to be stored /used/cared very professionally
- Installation of single switch control

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Conclusion

Based on the above discussions, it can be concluded that there is an urgent need on the part of librarians and authorities of various institutions to go ahead and prepare a manual with all policy, procedures, guidelines, operational mechanisms and materials, essential to face any type of disaster successfully to save great knowledge treasure and humanity The government bodies and professional associations should also guide the libraries and library professionals about disaster management through reading materials and training programs.

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