

Survey of Disaster Preparedness by Heads of Academic Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the state of disaster preparedness by twenty-one heads of academic libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted in conducting the study. The twenty-one libraries were purposively selected. A questionnaire was designed as instrument for data collection. Data were analyzed using frequency count and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that, the level of staff sensitization and awareness on disaster preparedness was at their lowest ebb, as 71.4% were not sensitized at all. The activities of insects, termites, rodents and roof leakages were the major threats to the safety of library resources, and 100% did not have insurance policy for their resources among others. The study recommended holding of regular compulsory awareness and training sessions for staff of academic libraries on disaster preparedness; carrying out periodic fumigation of book shelves using insecticides and rodent-poison; and the establishment of Disaster Response Teams. The need for library insurance to cover their human and material resources was also suggested.

KEYWORDS: Disaster preparedness, Insurance, Academic libraries, Nigeria,

Introduction

Library disasters have the unique quality of being both unexpected and inevitable. Disasters can be caused by nature. These include floods, earthquakes, and tornadoes. Disasters can be caused by man. These include civil unrest, arson, and vandalism. While we tend to think of disasters as large scale events, most disasters will be smaller in scope, much less newsworthy such roof leakages, termite activities, yet just as destructive. Libraries and Archives are bedevilled by everyday assaults: leaking roofs, dripping pipes, a mouldy book returned by a patron, a small fire set in the book return, a window left open during a night of pouring rain.

People generally think of disasters as events that occur suddenly, causing damage in a matter of seconds, hours or days. Some disasters, however, occur so slowly, that we suddenly realize we are in a disaster that has been underway for some time and may continue for an extended period of time. The cumulative damage may not be known for years and the public may not be aware or concerned until the damage reaches crisis proportions-building cracks, rodents, termites and insect activities. In similar a vein, Adinku (2003) discussed disasters in library context according to intensity of impact and time dimensions as “sudden” collapse of building due to an earthquake, fire outbreak, or faulty electrical gadgets, explosives or arson; the “slow” water/rainfall, leakages in library, burst pipes located in stack and “developing” or “creeping” deterioration of library materials due to mould formation or termites activities among others.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study limited its investigation on the levels of disaster preparedness of academic libraries in the North-Eastern Nigeria. The number of libraries covered in the study in each state were as follows: 5 Adamawa; 5 Bauchi; 5 Borno; 2 Gombe; 3 Taraba; and 1 Yobe.

Significance of the Study

Disaster preparedness is a very crucial matter that academic libraries should not take for granted, least they will be caught unawares in an event of a disaster. Disaster preparedness is the near answer to any form of disaster either on small or wide scale, since the level of preparedness will determine to a large extent, the ability of a library to prevent or reduce its consequences on its staff, resources, equipment or facilities. The study will be significant in these ways:

The findings of the study will stimulate Heads of academic libraries in the North-Eastern Nigeria to come up with disaster plan schedules and strategies that will enable their staff to be disaster consciousness. Furthermore, the study will assist academic institutions in the North-Eastern Nigeria to provide basic disaster kits for disaster preparedness and training of staff on basic disaster management skills.

The study will be a contribution to the literature on disaster preparedness generally and on academic libraries in particular, as well as for academic discourse for those interested in disaster management-related issues.

Statement of the problem

The perception that disaster preparedness is not a major concern in academic libraries is compounded by the fact that, many Library and Information Science Departments in Nigerian Universities do not offer courses on the topic. Furthermore, many disasters that occur in academic libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria are not properly documented, and quite a number of cases go unreported.

Planning in advance is the key to survival whether about a person, a family, a community or public institution such as a public library. Thus, disaster preparedness should be a major concern for any public library that wants to survive (Kurilecz, 2006). Since disasters are not location specific, the impetus for this research was

borne to investigate into the disaster preparedness levels of academic libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to determine the various level of disaster preparedness by academic libraries in the North-Eastern Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the level of staff sensitization and awareness on disaster preparedness of their libraries;
2. Examine major threats to the safety of library resources that could lead to a disaster.
3. Highlight the importance of Disaster Plan, Disaster Response Team, and structured staff training programmes on disaster preparedness;
4. Determine measures that are necessary for the prevention of fire and flood disasters; and
5. Find out the availability of insurance policy of academic libraries for their resources.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How would you describe the level of your staff sensitization and awareness on disaster preparedness?
2. What factors would you consider as major threats or are likely to cause one form of disaster or the other in your library?
3. Does your library have any structured training programmes for its staff on disaster preparedness?
4. What equipment or facilities do you have in the library for the prevention of fire and flood disasters?
5. Does your library have any insurance policy for its resources?

Literature Review

Disasters have been defined by different authors variously. For instance, Eden, Graham and Feather (1996), define disasters as ‘any incidents which threatens human safety and /or damages, or threatens to damage, a library’s buildings, collections (or items) therein, equipment and systems’. According to Charlotte (2003), a disaster is defined as ‘an event that is beyond the powers of the first responder to prevent or control, and that results in serious damage and prolonged service destruction at several sites and possibly a number of casualties’. Baumwoll (2008) sees disaster as the occurrence of a hazard or event that may cause harm, and the inability of a society to manage the consequences of the event. He gave a mathematical equation as follows: Events (hazard) + Inability to manage = Disaster.

While the International Federation of Library Association (2006) defines a disaster, whether natural or man-made as “an event whose timing is unexpected and whose consequences are seriously destructive”, Federal Emergency Management Agency (1990) describes disaster as “an occurrence that has resulted in property

damage, deaths, and/or injuries to a community”. The United Nations (1992) describe disaster as “ a serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using its own resources”.

Looking at the above definitions and descriptions, what can be deduced is that, disaster is a sudden unfortunate happening that causes not only damage to property but brings calamities such as great sufferings, injuries and even deaths to human beings.

Effect of disasters

In libraries, archives and museums there is a likely-hood of fire as the collections are mostly organic in nature. Once fire starts, it is difficult to save those materials which get fire. Items not directly engulfed in flames can be charred by soot and smoke. Heat emitted from fire causes bindings to shrink and warp and plastic base materials to melt. Water used for fighting fire can cause enormous damage. Besides fire, floods, high winds, cyclones, earth quakes are also agents of deterioration for the library collections. These will lead documents to absorb water, swell, warp and become extremely vulnerable to physical damage. Dyes and ink may bleed and book pages stick together. Leather bindings seriously warp and change shape. Effects of disasters on library collections are too obvious to comprehend.

Disaster Preparedness

Disaster planning might not seem a pressing concern-until disaster strikes. Libraries need to make every effort to prepare themselves for possible disasters, by analysing their situation and resources, and devising disaster preparedness plan in order to reduce the effect of disasters when it occurs. While the National Fire Protection Association (2004) describes preparedness as “activities, programs, systems developed to support and enhance mitigation, response to, and recovery from disaster emergencies”, Sutton and Tierney (2006) enumerated eight dimensions of desired end for preparedness activities such as: Hazard knowledge; management; direction; coordination of emergency operations; formal and initial responses of agreements; resources acquisition aimed at ensuring that emergency functions are carried out smoothly; life safety protection; property protection; emergency coping and restoration of key functions; and initiation of recovery activities.

Fox (1989) identified five elements of disaster preparedness as protection, planning, prevention, response and recovery. Similarly, Sutton & Tierney (2006) aligned with Fox (1989) position by describing disaster preparedness as a concept encompassing all measures aimed at enhancing life safety when a disaster occurs. It also include actions designed to enhance the ability to undertake emergency actions in order to protect property and certain disaster damage and disruption as well the ability to engage in post-disaster restoration and early recovery activities.

The National Response Framework (2008) provides three principal benefits of planning: (1) it allows jurisdictions to influence the course of events in an emergency by determining in advance the actions, policies, and processes that will be followed; (2) it guides other preparedness activities; and (3) it contributes to unity of effort by

providing a common blueprint for activity in the event of an emergency, and concluded that, planning is a foundational element of both preparedness and response. Perry and Lindell (2003), however, approach disaster preparedness from the planning perspective, identifying ten guiding principles to be adhered to during the planning. The authors take the position that appropriate planning principles are a critical foundation for preparedness.

Library staff should be enlightened about disasters generally, its causes, the immediate action to be taken during emergency situations. These could be possible through sensitization programmes as adduced by Ogden (1999) who supports the use of working policy that would ensure routine training and sensitization on safety measures and security measures for recovery after natural disaster. This position was further supported by Hasenay & Kritalic (2010) who asserted that, “the first step should be raising the awareness and education about the importance of disaster management issues as a prerequisite for efficient, comprehensive and sustainable preservation of services and collections”. Oboko (1991) also argued for the need to make library staff aware of rescue options available to them in times of emergency. Furthermore, disaster preparedness involves creation of awareness among people living in disaster prone areas of impending danger they face and how best to respond in the event of an occurrence. Public education on disaster mitigation is very important.

From the standpoint of Alegbeleye (1993), preparedness in the context of disaster control planning for libraries and allied institutions, means, “being in a state of alertness and vigilance so that when disaster occurs the organization is not caught napping, but is indeed in a position to react responsibly, maturely and rationally”. The disaster preparedness plan is a comprehensive document/ guide which describe procedures as where to get what, whom to contact during emergencies. Lyall (1993) explained a disaster preparedness plan “as a document which describes procedures desired to prevent and prepare for disasters and those proposed to respond and recover from disasters when they occur. The responsibility of performing these tasks is allocated to various staff members who comprise “the disaster team/committee”.

All preparedness activities must be based on knowledge about hazards, the likelihood of different types of disaster events, and likely impacts on the natural and built environment. Hazard analysis identifies where likely hazards exist in the surrounding vicinity and within the building, their probability and criticality, so as to prepare a mitigation plan based on the vulnerabilities found. It also implies taking inventory of all equipment such as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, fire alarms, fire tracers etc are relevant by making sure that they are in good working condition for use in emergency circumstances. If a library does not have such check mechanisms, the library may be taken unawares in the event of a disaster.

In 2003 a survey was launched world-wide among National Libraries in order to know which ones did have a disaster plan. The results were alarming. Out of 177 libraries, only 39 (22%) had a disaster plan (IFLA-PAC, 2006). In a similar survey of Croatian libraries, Hasenay & Kritalic (2010) found that only 5 (13%) libraries had official written document that represents disaster plan, and 3 (8%) had such plan in an unofficial form. These findings probably may be a general reflection of what is

obtainable in most academic libraries in Nigeria today.

Insurance is an act, measure, or provision that gives protection against an undesirable event or risk. Knowing fully well that disasters are undesirable risks, libraries should enter into agreements with insurance firms to give their staff financial protection against loss or harm, or insure some of their resources or buildings. An insurance policy could be comprehensive or partial depending on the agreement entered and the availability of funds. While Brawner (1993) emphasized that libraries should not take issue of insurance for granted, Ungarelli (1984) stressed the importance of insurance coverage for the buildings and contents of libraries. Some libraries resort to some forms of activities such as fundraising, solicitation of donations in kind or cash for resuscitation after disaster incidence.

Many writers have generally classified disasters into two broad categories as shown in table 1. Coppola (2011) however, seems to be more comfortable with “Environmental” instead of “Natural” factors.

Table 1: Taxonomies of causes of disasters

Natural/Environmental	Man-made
Earthquakes	Biological contamination
Fires-forests, mysterious	Chemical spill
Flooding	Civil/political disturbances and terrorism
Hurricanes & Tycoons	Construction failure-building collapse, roof leakages
Snow storms/falls	Electricity outages
Tidal waves	Explosives – gas, sprinklers etc.
Volcanic eruptions	Human error and carelessness
Rains & windstorms	Nuclear Disasters
Biological agents-rodents, insects, moulds	Robbery
Desertification	Sewage overflow
Drought	Accidental sprinkler activation
Landslides	Toxic fumes
Rock falls	Vandalism
Mud falls	Acts of war
	Arson
	Water overflow
	Bombings
	Electronic computer failure
	Epidemics & plagues (a flu endemic)

Source: (Baumwoll, 2008 & Coppola, 2011)

What is glaring from table 1 is that, man-made disasters apart from outweighing the natural or environmental factors, also has the highest chances of causing disaster. The scope of a disaster may be one room, one floor, one building, one organization, one community, one region, or one nation.

Nigeria is not immune to disasters either natural or man-made, for example, Lagos and Ibadan experienced severe floods during the rainy seasons of 2011&2012. In March 2010, the Federal Polytechnic Bauchi Librarian’s Office was gutted by a mysterious fire. In 2006, there was fire incidence in one of the laboratories in the School of Engineering of the Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. In presenting the

chronology of some disasters in Nigeria from July 2000-May 2007, in their study Abareh and Toyoy (2007) discovered 32 different kinds of disasters with various degrees of intensity of loss of lives and properties. The striking of all was the burning of Federal Polytechnic Idah Library, Kogi State, as a result of students' unrest, while the University of Benin Computer Centre was razed due to power outage. The following researchers have written extensively on disasters from various perspectives: Momani, 2011; Ibem, 2011; Chiadukobi, 2011; Margaret, 2011; and Ogedebe, 2012.

From the foregoing literature, what is evident is that planning for a disaster, is planning for the inevitable; a matter of "when", not "if". As individuals, organization or a community we shall accept that disasters will occur, we come to terms with their impacts and try to minimize through planning. Therefore, disaster preparedness and planning should be inextricable elements of our cultural resource stewardship as library professionals as stressed by Ngulube (2006) when he states that "a stitch in time saves nine".

Methodology

The study adopted the survey design method. One set of the questionnaire was constructed with 13 itemised open and closed-ended questions to elicit responses from respondents. The questionnaire was administered to thirty (30) heads of tertiary institutional libraries between June and August, 2013 by the researcher. The questionnaire had five sections: Section A: Background information; Section B: Disaster Awareness; Section C: Disaster Preparedness; Section D: Disaster Prevention; and Section E: Disaster Recovery.

The survey research was adopted in conducting the study. The population comprised of all the heads of academic libraries of tertiary institutions in North-Eastern Nigeria, which is made of six states namely: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. The Purposive Sampling technique was employed in selecting the academic libraries. In order to ensure a high rate of return, copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved by the researcher. Responses from the completed questionnaire were analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

Findings and Discussion

Thirty (30) copies of the questionnaire were administered to all the academic libraries in the North-Eastern Nigeria. Twenty-one (21) copies of the questionnaire were returned in useable forms which were valid for analysis, giving a response rate of 70 percent. The results and discussion were treated under five sub-headings: Disaster Preparedness; Disaster Awareness; Disaster Prevention; Disaster Response; and Disaster Recovery. Table 2 shows the background information of the responding libraries.

Table 2: Profile of responding libraries

Name of Library	Year established	Volume of Books	Journals	Staff
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi	1981	52,445	1,490	14 Professionals 16 Other cadres
Federal College of Education (Technical) Gombe	1977	24,201	2300	9 Professionals 32 Other cadres
Muhammadu Wabi Library, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi	1979	39,276	13,502	6 Professionals 10 Other cadres
Gombe State University Library	2005	27,350	3, 419	9 Professionals 23 Other cadres
Federal College of Education Library, Yola	1974	75,000	10,000	10 Professionals 12 Other cadres
College of Administration & Business Studies. Azare	1977	-	-	2 Professional 4 Other cadres
College of Agriculture Library Jalingo	1979	3400	-	2 Professionals 3 Other Cadres
Taraba State University Library, Jalingo	2008	4,777	-	3 Professionals 18 Other cadres
Taraba State Polytechnic Library, Jalingo	1991	5,576	530	3 Professionals 7 Other Cadres
Abubakar Tatari Ali Central Library, Bauchi	1988	15,000	500	4 Professional 34 Other Cadres
Abu Ali Library, College of Education Azare	1977	25,202	8,750	5 Professionals 16 Other Cadres
Abdulrahman Ghaji Library, Adamawa State University, Mubi	2003	39,405	343	5 Professionals 45 Other Cadres
Prof. Jubril Aminu Library, Federal Polytechnic, Mubi	1979	33,943	30	7 Professionals 18 Other Cadres

College for Legal Studies, Yola	1978	17,000	2,500	3 Professionals 5 Other Cadres
Liman Chiroma Library, Federal College of Education (Technical), Potiskum	1989	9,156	4,360	9 Professionals 21 Other Cadres
Ibrahim Babangida Library Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola	1981	34,503	-	4 Professionals 13 Other Cadres
Haruna Ningi College Library College of Education Waka-Biu	1986	12,250	470	3 Professionals 15 Other Cadres
Ibrahim Musa Library Kashim Ibrahim College of Education, Maiduguri	1988	28,319	-	5 Professionals 23 Other Cadre
Borno College of Agriculture Library, Maiduguri	1977	11,000	273	2 Professionals 7 Other Cadres
Ramat Polytechnic Library, Maiduguri	1975	12,242	1,700	3 Professionals 19 Other Cadres
Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri	1975	312,180	3,108	21 Professionals 122 Other Cadres

-Information not supplied

Source: Field survey, 2012

Disaster Awareness

The first research objective was to examine the level of staff sensitization on disaster awareness which research question 1 addressed.

Research Question 1: What is the level of your staff sensitization on disaster awareness?

The levels of staff sensitization on disaster preparedness

The results shows that, 5 (23.8%) staff were partially sensitized, while 15 (71.4%) were not sensitized at all, with only 1(4.7%) fully sensitized. What is glaring from these results is that, lack of sensitization remains a potent danger towards disaster preparedness of library staff of these libraries.

Threatening factors

The second research objective was to identify major threat or risk to the safety of library resources which could lead to disaster; which the research question two addressed.

Research Question 2: What factors constitute or pose as major threats or risk, to cause one form of disaster or the other in your library?

The purpose of this question is to identify some factors which constitute as threats or risk that are likely to cause one form of disaster or the other. These threats or risks are not disasters per say, but the presence of any of them may lead to a disaster if not contained in good time.

Threatening factors that could cause disaster in the library

It was found that, 18 (32.72%) of the libraries admitted that the activities of insects, termites and rodents as major threats or risks in their libraries, this was followed by roof leakages representing 16 (29.09%), Rain and Windstorm, 12(21.81%), while Fire outbreaks, 5(9.09%) and Explosion 4(7.27%) respectively. The response rate increased to 55 because all the libraries chose almost all the threatening factors, hence the overlap.

Disaster preparedness

The third objective of the study was to highlight the importance of Disaster Plan; Disaster Response Team and Training Programmes on disaster preparedness, which research question three attempted to answer:

Research Question 3: Does your library have a disaster plan; disaster response team and structured training programmes for its staff on disaster preparedness?

Availability of Disaster Plan and Disaster Response Team and training programmes

The result revealed that, majority 20 (95.2%) of the libraries do not have Written Disaster Plan or Disaster Response Team. Only 1 (4.7%) library claimed it has a Written Disaster Plan. On the structured staff training programmes, all the 21 (100%) libraries did not have any form of training programmes for their staff on disaster preparedness. What can be inferred from this result is the napping state of these libraries in an event of emergencies; hence the resources of the libraries will remain vulnerable to the hazards of any type of disaster.

Disaster Prevention

Research objective four was on determining measures that were necessary for fire disaster prevention.

Research Question 4: What equipment or facilities does your library has for fire prevention?

Equipment and facilities in the library for disaster prevention

From the findings 19(70.3%) libraries had fire extinguishers; 4(14.8%) flood drains, and 2(7.4%) Fire alarms respectively, while Smoke detectors and Fire tracers were 1(3.7%) respectively. The total increased to twenty-seven responses, because some of the libraries indicated more than one equipment or facility for fire disaster prevention.

Disaster Recovery

The Fifth objective of the research was to find out whether the libraries had Insurance Policy for its resources.

Research Question 5: Does your library have any insurance policy for its resources?

The answer to this question showed that, all the 21 (100%) libraries admitted that they did not have. One of the ways or measures libraries can take to recovery from the impact of disaster is having an insurance policy which should be comprehensive enough, to cover its resources.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study revealed the following:

1. The level of staff sensitization on disaster preparedness is not encouraging at all, since it was found that majority of the staff were not sensitized all. This finding is at variance with Oboko (1991) study on coping with flood disaster of a university library. He argued for the need to make library staff aware of rescue options available to them in times of emergency.
2. The study also revealed that the activities of Insects/Termites /Rodents; and Roof leakages constituted major threats/risks to the safety of library resources.
3. The study found that, all the libraries except one neither have Disaster Plan nor Disaster Response Team. This correlates with the findings of IFLA-PAC (2003) and Hasenay & Kritalic (2010) on lack of Disaster Plans and Disaster Committee in libraries. Furthermore, all the libraries had no structured training programmes for their staff on disaster preparedness.
4. Majority of the academic libraries have fire extinguishers to prevent fire disasters.
5. It was found all the libraries did not have insurance policy for their resources.

Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that, majority of staff of the academic libraries surveyed were not sensitized at all on disaster preparedness. The activities of insects, termites, rodents, and roof leakages constitute major threats to the safety of library resources. The study furthermore revealed that, all the libraries except one had no Disaster Response Team, while structured staff training on disaster preparedness was lacking. The academic libraries had no insurance policy for their resources.

Libraries need to assess their vulnerabilities and familiarize themselves with all the necessary steps to take in response to any disaster situation. There is no substitute for good preparedness when it comes to disaster response. Time invested in establishing an appropriate and effective disaster management plan will pay inestimable dividends in ensuring the well-being of staff and resources. Disaster preparedness is an issue that should not be handled with levity, and must be of constant concern (Gunter, 1990).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were advanced:

1. Heads of academic libraries should ensure adequate sensitization of all staff on disaster preparedness at all times. Creating disaster consciousness among library staff will make all the difference during disaster situations.

2. Academic libraries should embark on regular fumigation of book shelves by using insecticides and rodent-poison so as reduce the activities of insects, termites and rodents. The roof of library buildings should be checked before, and during the rainy season in order to repair leaking spots so that water seepage will be stopped or reduced to protect materials.
3. Academic libraries should establish Disaster Response Teams who would implement their disaster plans. They should hold regular compulsory staff awareness and training sessions as supported by Ogden (1999); Adinku (2003); and Hasenay and Kritalic (2010).
4. Academic libraries should also acquire more smoke detectors, fire alarms and fire tracers in their bid to prevent fire disasters.
5. Academic libraries should make deliberate efforts to insure their staff, resources and facilities with the full mandate of their parent organizations.

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