

Full Length Research Paper

Damage controls of library materials in federal Universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom State

Attahiru K. O*, Ottong Ubong and E. Y. Edet

Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Education University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

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This paper aims to investigate the level of Disaster management and preservation of Library materials in tertiary institutions, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection with librarians in University of Calabar, Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH) and University of Uyo as respondents; Findings of the survey show that all the respondents were aware of occurrence of disaster, but there has not been major catastrophes in the institutions. In the area of disaster preparedness the institutions are aware of several safeguard techniques, although they have not fully installed needed equipments and facilities. The findings of the study place the universities on a very low score in relations to ability to respond rapidly to disaster and concrete plans of action for recovery and disaster control.

Key words: Disaster management; Library materials; Federal universities; Disaster preparedness; Safeguard techniques

INTRODUCTION

Disaster is common occurrence that causes damage, destruction, ecological disruption, loss of human life, human suffering and deterioration of health services on a scale sufficient to warrant an extraordinary response from outside the affected community or area (WHO). (The League of Red Cross Society 1970), Paul Eden and Graham Matthews define a "disaster as any incident which threatens human safety and /or damages, or threaten to damage, a library's buildings, collections (or items therein), equipment and systems. Chandra, Harish (2004) defined library disaster as an event or series of events which can significantly disrupt a library's ability to support institutional activities and research over a period of time. Disasters have two categories: natural and human-made (Alegbeleye, 1993). The flooding of the Arno River in November 1966 which damaged 1,200,000 volumes and pamphlets in the Bibliotheca National central in Italy, Feather (1991) can be characterized as natural disaster. Other natural disasters may include Flooding, Hurricanes, Blizzards, Storms, Land Slide. The 11 September 2004 terrorist

bombing in USA and the invasion of Iraq are disasters caused by actions of human beings. Kelman I, Netherlands 2001 Harvey (1993), other human disasters may include; theft and criminal damage, fire, death, poor health/general sickness, contamination, war/conflict/terrorism, inadequate security leading to breakage of theft, poorly maintained building. They also say that technical disasters include power cuts, break down of computer networks, gas leaks, communication failure, cooling, heating and ventilation system. Disaster management according to Lovecy (2005) is a process or strategy that is put in place or to manage any type of catastrophic event that may take place. Generally, it deals with strategy organization management process to use to protect critical assets of an organization from hazards risks that can cause disaster and to ensure continuance within the planned lifetime. Matthews and Eden (1996) states, that Disaster Management encompasses broader management issues such as finance, risk assessment and training. Using the term also emphasizes that it ought

*Corresponding author. E-mail: attahiru101@gmail.com



Figure 1. M25 consortium of academic libraries.

to be treated as a key area of library management and need due attention by senior Management with the library and the universities.

The goal of University education can be seen as the pursuit of knowledge in the broadest possible way. (Quality education would be impossible without a functional library). The library shares a common objective with the University to make the learner a knowledgeable personality. It is therefore, necessary to have a University with a modern infrastructures and adequate collections of materials both in prints and electronic formats to meet the major objective of the University. The University library is the major infrastructure to support the tripartite functions of the University, which are teaching, learning and research. The academic library or University library is organized as an essential resource centre which no student/ staff can afford to dispense with if they want to attain required academic goals. The importance of the library can be further elaborated as follows:

Enabling forces for learning;

Providing an Environment in which creativity is fostered; Creating and Recreation of Academic Activities; Promoting and Dissemination of Research;

Enabling Networking between Researchers;

Heart of an Academic Institution

Repository of culture and society.

Having realized the importance of library there is needed to have a disaster management control planned to protect the Universities libraries from hazards. Thus, this study is an assessment of disaster management of libraries materials in federal Universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study include the following:

- To examine the occurrences of disaster in University of Calabar and University of Uyo, Nigeria;
- To find out the disaster prevention strategy;
- To identify the techniques for safe guarding libraries towards disaster.
- To find out the preparedness, response and recovery strategy; and
- To find out the disaster control plan and its implementation in the two libraries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consortium of Academic Libraries (2005) developed a model that will assist in Disaster Management, in the planning, preparedness, recovery and reaction. According to them, despite the growing recognition of the importance of disaster management there are a few working models disaster control within the university libraries. In this model, the Disaster Management is central to prevention, preparedness recovery, and reaction. It is designed to complement individual research as any plan must be detailed and intuition-specific to be of any use. It can be observed that without the centralization of the Disaster management culture, other areas like prevention, preparedness, reaction and recovery cannot be effective; this study is based on this model because it has help to discuss the issue of disaster management in libraries, it has also help to discuss the relationship between prevention, preparedness, reaction, recovery and disaster management in libraries (Figure 1).

According to Lyall (1993) since a disaster plan must include preventive before the disaster plan educations such as repair of leaking roofs, the improvement of maintenance and the upgrading of security. He specifies that preventive activities should be incorporated into the dry activities of the institution that disaster can be

prevented simply implementing adequate preventive practices.

The M25 consortium of academic libraries specifies that there is need to protect the library collections from many disasters.

They emphasize the need for preparedness. Through proper management and planning, disaster can be prevented from happening. According to Roy, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" remains a valuable aphorism for disaster prevention. Everything that you can reasonably do to avoid or lessen the impact of disasters by planning ahead of time will be well worth your time, effort and resources. Lyall (1993) study reveals that preparedness plans are usually the most important in coping with disasters. Preparedness includes insuring collections, creating and periodically updating contingency plans, allocating salvage priorities, identifying alternative storage sites, providing adequate fire protection, and providing opportunities for staff to be aware of what is expected of them in the event of disaster.

However, librarians often overlook disaster preparedness even if it is fundamental to the protection of documentary materials (Buchanan 2000: 159). Librarians should prepare for disasters rather than wait for events such as the tsunami that swept across Asia in 2004 (Amarasiri, 2005: 309) or the Hurricane Katrina that completely destroyed the Martin Luther King branch of the New Orleans Library in 2005 (American Library Association, 2005) to take action. A stitch in time saves nine. Having policies and procedures in place minimizes the stress associated with disasters and the damage to collections. Furthermore, a disaster plan that covers the building where collections are housed may assist in bringing to light issues related to facility management and the need for preventive maintenance before things get out of hand.

Wilson (2009) study reveals that Scholars in some circles, particularly in Africa, are skeptical about the importance of disaster management especially in public libraries. There is a myth that disaster management should be the concern of Legal Deposit collections, 112 Innovation, No.32 June 2006 Archives, and research and special libraries rather than public libraries. The skeptics further contend that disaster management which encompasses such occurrences as hurricanes and terrorist bombings may not be applicable to most public libraries in Africa. One need only look back at the hurricane that destroyed valuable documentary materials in Swaziland in 1984 (Alegbeleye, 1993: 14) and the earthquake tremors that were recently experienced in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe to be reminded of the fact that such catastrophes are not far-fetched likelihoods in public libraries in Africa. In view of the above, this study is set to examine how disaster is being managed in federal universities in Cross River and Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

THE SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in two Federal Universities and one State University. The Universities are, the University of Calabar (UNICAL), Calabar, Cross River State, the University of Uyo (UNIUYO), Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, and Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH), Calabar, Cross River State. The University of Calabar came into existence as an autonomous Federal University in 1975, The University of Uyo, in the early 1990s and the State University in 2000 incidentally; all the three Universities sprang out of previously existing institutions. The University of Calabar was predated by the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Calabar Campus, (1973). The University of Uyo was antedated by the University of Cross River State, Uyo which started in the early 1980s, while CRUTECH metamorphosed from Calabar polytechnic, which had been in existence since 1973. While the University of Calabar Library is a complex in its permanent site, the University of Uyo Library is yet to be properly located in the permanent site of the University, and is therefore in a structure that was not designed as a "Library Building". Similarly, the State University, which operates in about four (4) Campuses across the State, is yet to have a real modern Library, However, the libraries of the three Universities have served their respective University communities over the years and have had their periods of Strength, and/or dismal, growth including, perhaps periods of adversity like disaster.

In its methodology the study adopted a three pronged approach to data collection and information gathering comprising:

1. Ex post facto: The analysis and assessment of an event (or occurrence) that had already taken place. Disasters are normally investigated after they had occurred.
2. Survey: The use of questionnaire to elicit information from subjects (the respondents) on the issue under investigation. The questionnaire was the main instrument of data collection administered, however, not on a large scale as "social survey" but only the top targeted group of the library staff.
3. Interview of strategically placed persons: This includes persons who come in contact with (or are witnesses of) the phenomenon under study such persons are usually supposedly very knowledgeable about the subject of investigation. In the case of this study such a person is the "University Librarian".

The study involved thirty-five (35) respondents, distributed as follows: UNICAL -15 UNIUYO-10; CRUTECH-10. The study concentrated on the top echelon of the library staff including staff of the rank of Lecturer1 and above (Table 1). Two University Librarians (UL) including that of UNICAL and CRUTECH were

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents by university.

| Sex | UNICAL | | UNIUYO | | CRUTECH | |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| | 8 (53.3) | 7 (46.7) | 5 (50.10) | 5 (50.0) | 6 (60.0) | 4 (40.0) |
| Qualification | | | | | | |
| Doctorate (Ph.D) | 7 (46.7) | | 4 (40.0) | | 3 (30.0) | |
| Masters (M.Sc) | 8 (53.3) | | 6 (60.0) | | 7 (70.0) | |
| Status | | | | | | |
| Professor | - | | - | | - | |
| Associate Prof. | - | | - | | - | |
| Senior Lecturer | 7 (46.7) | | 5 (50.0) | | 5 (50.0) | |
| Lecturer I | 8 (53.3) | | 5 (50.0) | | 5 (50.0) | |
| Position | | | | | | |
| University Librarian (UL) | 1 (6.7) | | - | | 1 (10.0) | |
| Deputy UL | 1 (6.7) | | 1 (10.0) | | 1 (10.0) | |
| Head of Division | 6 (40.0) | | 5 (50.0) | | 4 (40.0) | |
| Head of Unit | 7 (46.6) | | 4 (40.0) | | 4 (40.0) | |

Percentages in Parenthesis.

included in the in-depth interview of strategically placed persons. In UNIUYO the Deputy University Librarian covered that role because the UL was outside the country at the time of the study. The observations (findings) of the study are presented in the section below.

Substantive issue s

Socio-demographic/characteristics (personal data) of the respondents:

The top segment of Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by sex. The data reflect the situation on ground, in terms of the gender mix in the employment of Library staff in academic libraries. On qualifications, the table shows that all the respondents hold, at least, a Masters degree (M.Sc. or MLS), with 46.87% of UNICAL; 40.0 percent of UNIUYO; and 30.0% CRUTECH, having the Doctorate (Ph. D) degree. On status all the respondents were of the ranks of senior Lecturer or Lecturer I. Shortly before the study, UNICAL had two (2) professors (UL and Deputy UL) in the Library, But following the completion of term by the Librarian, and the retirement of the Deputy, both had ceased to be part of the University Library staff. The UL of UNIUYO holds a Ph.D and she is a professor by rank, but due to unavailability she was not part of the subjects included as respondent.

The Deputy in UNIUYO Library was of the rank of senior Lecturer. These facts explain why UNIUYO does

not reflect any staff of the rank of professor, or Associate professor among the respondents. The situation in CRUTECH, as shown in Table 1, reflects what was on ground as at the time of the study. (As a relatively young University, CRUTECH is poised to be up the top ranks of professor and Associate professor which, as at the time of the study were recanted). In relation to positions the bottom segments of Table 1 show the distribution of the respondents by positional ranks in the respective Libraries. The distribution portrays effective performance and enhances the supervision of the other Library staff. In time with academic tradition, the UL in UNICAL and CRUTECH are, by comendature, seen in "Acting" capacity, since they are not yet of the professorial rank. The experiences and views of the respondents, as they relate to the major topic of study, "Disaster" are reflected in the sub-sections that follow.

The occurrence s of disaster

On the subject of disaster in libraries, all the respondents were aware of occurrences of disaster in libraries as well as of the fact that, disaster could be cataclysmic. While all of them have ever heard of disaster in libraries, 57.1% have ever witnessed the occurrence of disaster in library. The disaster includes flood, rain storm, rippling tornado, fire, dampness, and leaking roof, among others. Investigation shows that UNICAL Library had since its inception experienced disaster arising from rain/storm, fire, leaking roof, and dampness, with varying enormous

Table 2. Prevention of disaster in libraries.

| Items | UNICAL | UNIUYO | CRUTECH |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Routine regular checks: | | | |
| Opinion: | 15(100.0) | 10(100.0) | 10(100.0) |
| Practice: | 6 (40.0) | 4 (40.0) | 4 (40.0) |
| 2. Occasional Survey/Checks: | | | |
| Opinion: | 15(100.0) | 10(100.0) | 10(100.0) |
| Practice: | 4(26.7) | 2(20.0) | 2(20.0) |
| 3. Installation of fire extinguishers: | | | |
| Opinion: | 15(100.0) | 10(100.0) | 10(100.0) |
| Practice: | 12(80.0) | 8(80.0) | 7(70.0) |
| 4. Structural designs: | | | |
| Opinion: | 15(100.0) | 10(100.0) | 10(100.0) |
| Practice: | 13(86.7) | 3(30.0) | 4(40.0) |

cost. The other two libraries had also in the last ten (10) years had one form of disaster or the other. Disaster, as observed by the respondents, could be a natural phenomenon, or as a result of human neglect. Although disasters vary in their catastrophic magnitude, and they rarely (or very rarely) occur, the general opinion is that “disaster is disaster” and should, as much as possible, be well managed

Prevention of disaster

Given the heavy loss and the disruptive nature of disaster, it is expedient that disaster in libraries should be prevented. Investigations in that direction yield the data in Table 2. In four major areas of preventive measures, including regular checks, occasional checks, installation of fire extinguishers and structural (that is architectural) designs of the buildings there are on nature in “what should be” and “what actually is” covered in the table respectively, by “Opinion” and “Practice”. Librarians are aware of the ideal in terms of “what should be”, the discrepancies between “Opinion” and Practice” show the situation on ground, and is indicative of the poor State of preventive measures against disaster.

The observation as it relates to UNICAL on item 4 reflects the reality of the situation because library building is a modern architectural complex with due regard to issues of prevention of disaster, especially as it relates to fire incident. Other aspects of disaster prevention plan put in place by the Universities though on a relatively small scale, include the installation of electrical/mechanical alarm, automatic smoke detectors proper channeling of electrical appliances, the use of external consultants, the use of security personal for monitoring the environment, as well as the creation and

proper storage of back -up records/documents.

Safeguards

Other than preventive measures against disaster, another direction of investigation in the study was to examine the techniques explored to safeguard library materials and resource against damage and destruction. Librarians are aware of several safeguard techniques which include. Duplication and the use of carbon, microform, magnetic tapes, floppy diskette, storage (on - site and off- site) and dispersal prevention and safeguard against disaster beefed up through improved techniques of risk identification and management. The safeguard techniques are well known (opinion) but they are used in varying low degrees (practice) the libraries UNICAL is somewhat more advanced in the exploration of the various techniques, although still on a relatively low level. All the 2 Universities have fairly well developed ICT units but UNIUYO is constrained by space for the creation of units and subunits, and for the installation of needed equipments and facilities. There is need to explore more into the areas of advanced information storage and retrieval, especially in the context of virtual library. The techniques of dispersal and off-site storage should be further explored and utilized to act as buffers against damage and loss.

Preparedness, response and recovery

Other areas of investigation in the research include the preparedness for disaster, response to disaster and plans for recovery and disaster control. Findings reveal that the two Federal institutions in Nigeria are not well prepared for disaster. In Uniuoyo, the library building is old with poor architectural

design there is no sign of preparedness. Although in Unical the building is a multi architectural that can withstand any form of disaster. In the issue of response and Recovery, Unical removed the water damaged books from the shelves and dry-dry the books. In Uniuyo, and CRUTECH there has been no major catastrophe therefore there is no preparedness, Response for recovery and disaster control.

The issues in these areas touch on policy and plans of actions. Thus, data collection in this regard was concentrated on the University Librarian, or the Deputy, where, as in the case of UNIUYO, the UL was not available. The elements involved include the existence of policy guideline and plan for rapid response and recovery, the existence of a stand-by selected team for monitoring and quick response as well as for education and training of staff on issues of disaster control. For success on these issues, there should be a disaster control team headed by the UL, and a disaster control plan (or manual), constantly monitored, evaluated and updated. The finding of the study placed the Universities on very low score in relation to issues of preparedness for disaster, ability to respond rapidly to disaster, and concrete plans of action for recovery and disaster control.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The University of Calabar, Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH) and University of Uyo in Akwa Ibom State are aware of occurrences of disaster but there has not been major catastrophes in these institutions. In Unical the library has experienced disaster arising from leaking roof and dampness of information resources with varying enormous cost.

In the two federal Universities the situation on ground is indicative measure apart from fire extinguisher against disaster. There is also little or nothing or preparedness response, and recovery strategies in these libraries.

In order to effectively manage disaster in these institution; there is need to indentify techniques and for safeguarding libraries towards disaster which covers creating awareness and identification; prevention preparedness; response and recovery strategies. It is also very important to establish disaster plan which may include such elements as risk management, prevention, preliminary system development, final system design; testing and approval. There is also need to organize training and workshop for libraries by University libraries as well as University management in Diligence University.

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