

DISASTER MANAGEMENT FOR LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT: -

The present paper highlights Disaster Management in Libraries in managing a disaster or any emergency. The concept of disaster management, types of disasters has also been discussed.

KEYWORDS: Disaster, Disaster Management. Libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Disaster management aims to reduce, or avoid, the potential losses from hazards, assure prompt and appropriate assistance to victims of disaster, and achieve rapid and effective recovery. The Disaster management cycle illustrates the ongoing process by which governments, businesses, and civil society plan for and reduce the impact of disasters, react during and immediately following a disaster, and take steps to recover after a disaster has occurred. Appropriate actions at all points in the cycle lead

to greater preparedness, better warnings, reduced vulnerability or the prevention of disasters during the next iteration of the cycle. The complete disaster management cycle includes the shaping of public policies and plans that either modify the causes of disasters or mitigate their effects on people, property, and infrastructure.

(Corina Warfield)

DEFINITION OF DISASTER

The United Nations defines a disaster as a serious disruption of the functioning of a

Mitigation activities actually eliminate or reduce the probability of disaster occurrence, or reduce the effects of unavoidable disasters. Mitigation measures include building codes; vulnerability analyses updates; zoning and land use management; building use regulations and safety codes; preventive health care; and public education.

Mitigation will depend on the incorporation of appropriate measures in national and regional development planning. Its effectiveness will also depend on the availability of information on hazards, emergency risks, and the countermeasures to be taken. The mitigation phase, and indeed the whole disaster management cycle, includes the shaping of public policies and plans that either modify the causes of disasters or mitigate their effects on people, property, and infrastructure.

- **Preparedness** - Planning how to respond. Examples: preparedness plans; emergency exercises/training; warning systems.

The goal of emergency preparedness programs is to achieve a satisfactory level of readiness to respond to any emergency situation through programs that strengthen the technical and managerial capacity of governments, organizations, and communities. These measures can be described as logistical readiness to deal with disasters and can be enhanced by having response mechanisms and procedures,

rehearsals, developing long-term and short-term strategies, public education and building early warning systems. Preparedness can also take the form of ensuring that strategic reserves of food, equipment, water, medicines and other essentials are maintained in cases of national or local catastrophes.

During the preparedness phase, governments, organizations, and individuals develop plans to save lives, minimize disaster damage, and enhance disaster response operations. Preparedness measures include preparedness plans; emergency exercises/training; warning systems; emergency communications systems; evacuations plans and training; resource inventories; emergency personnel/contact lists; mutual aid agreements; and public information/education. As with mitigations efforts, preparedness actions depend on the incorporation of appropriate measures in national and regional development plans. In addition, their effectiveness depends on the availability of information on hazards, emergency risks and the countermeasures to be taken, and on the degree to which government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the general public are able to make use of this information.

- **Response** - Efforts to minimize the hazards created by a disaster. Examples: search and rescue; emergency relief.

The aim of emergency response is to provide immediate assistance to maintain life, improve health and support the morale of the affected population. Such assistance may range from providing specific but limited aid, such as assisting refugees with transport, temporary shelter, and food, to establishing semi-permanent settlement in camps and other locations. It also may involve initial repairs to damaged infrastructure. The focus in the response phase is on meeting the basic needs of the people until more permanent and sustainable solutions can be found. Humanitarian organizations are often strongly present in this phase of the disaster management cycle.

- **Recovery** - Returning the community to normal. Examples: temporary housing; grants; medical care.

As the emergency is brought under control, the affected population is capable of undertaking a growing number of activities aimed at restoring their lives and the infrastructure that supports them. There is no distinct point at which immediate relief changes into recovery and then into long-term sustainable development. There will be many opportunities during the recovery period to enhance prevention and increase preparedness, thus reducing vulnerability. Ideally, there should be a smooth transition from recovery to on-going development.

Recovery activities continue until all systems return to normal or better. Recovery measures, both short and long term, include returning vital life-support systems to minimum operating standards; temporary housing; public information; health and safety education; reconstruction; counseling programs; and economic impact studies. Information resources and services include data collection related to rebuilding, and documentation of lessons learned.

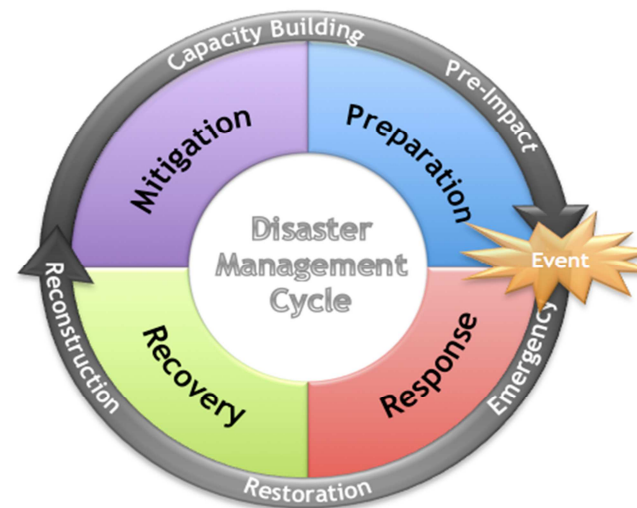


Fig:- 02 – Disaster Management Cycle

DISASTER IN LIBRARIES

The University of Vallabhi built by the Maitraka Kings during the years 475-775 A.D., had a library with a variety of Eastern literature. This university and its library lasted until the 12th century, when they were said to be completely destroyed by Arab invaders. Odantapuri University was founded by King Gopala (660-705 A.D.) and had a library that was rich in Brahmanical and Buddhist works. It is reported that Mohammad Bakhtiyar Khilji destroyed this

monastic university along with its library. The Vikramshila monastery built in the 8th century A.D. had a rich collection of texts in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Tibetan languages. Muslim invaders are said to have caused the disappearance of the excellent collection at Vikramashila.

The University of Nalanda Library was called Dharmaganja, and it was housed in three buildings named Ratnabodhi (ocean of pearls), Ratnasagar (sea of pearls) and Ratnaranjak (pearls of recreation). The first building was nine storeys high and the two others were of six storeys each. The library also undertook to publish new volumes and preserve valuable manuscripts. This superb institution did not die a natural death through deterioration. It fell victim to the invading hordes of Mohammad Bakhtiyar Khilji in the 13th century. The buildings, books and manuscripts, as well as the scholars, all were mercilessly annihilated and fire was set to the establishment of Nalanda.

The University at Somapuri, had its own library which possessed a wealth of Oriental literature. But the university was destroyed by fire in the middle of the 11th century A.D. The last of the famous seats of learning in Eastern India was Navadwipa in Bengal. It reached its height of glory from 1083 to 1106 A.D. as a centre of intellectual excellence as well as for its rich library facilities. However, this library was also

destroyed along with the centre by Mohammad Bakhtiyar Khilji.

Akbar, the greatest of Mughal emperors maintained a very rich library. But it is said that a sizable number of books added to the library were obtained from his conquests, from libraries in Gujrat, Jaunpur, Kashmir, Bihar, Bengal, and the Deccan. There is no record of how they were acquired: whether they were received as gifts, purchased or forcibly acquired.

After the downfall of the Mughals, the literary wealth of the Indian libraries was looted. In 1857, after the Sepoy mutiny, thousands of books were destroyed and thousands of important, valuable, and rare books were siphoned to England. (Narlikar, 2003; Weeraratne, 2003; Gul & Khan, 2008; Bhatt, 2009; van der Hoeven, & van Albada, 1996)

It is believed that the Sarasvati Mahal Library at Tanjavur was under threat from Muslim rulers. They wanted to burn down the Sarasvati Mahal Library which was treated like a temple of Tanjavur. A Maharashtrian Brahmin named Dabir Pant, who was a minister, saved the library by telling the vandals that in addition to Hindu books, the library also had copies of the Quran. (Palm-leaf,...,n.d.),

The Sikh Reference Library was established at the Golden Temple in Amritsar on 08 February, 1947 and it housed rare hand-written

manuscripts and scriptures on Sikhism. The library was set ablaze on 07 June, 1984 in the early hours of the morning. The destruction of the Sikh Reference Library is a loss that can never be replaced. "No wealth in the world can ever restore what was destroyed during the Operation Blue Star by the Indian government". (Walia, 2003, np.)

In May 1995, the 600-year-old shrine at Charar-i Sharif was destroyed by what the Indian occupation forces described as 'cross-firing' with a group of mujahideen who allegedly had taken shelter there. No mujahid was found when the shooting stopped. Three years earlier, in 1992 the library at Srinagar's main mosque was set ablaze. A large number of priceless manuscripts were destroyed. (Qazi, 2011)

During 1993, Thapar University library and Panjabi University Library were affected due to unprecedented floods on the night of 11 July 1993. Thapar Technology Campus was submerged under 1.4 meter to 2.4 meter of water for four to five days. The library on the campus had 63,000 items out of which 44,535 were destroyed completely. The library also lost computers, photocopying machines and CD's. At Panjabi University Library, there was hardly any loss to the collection and equipment except that a voltage stabiliser was damaged. Only those books were damaged which were borrowed by the users

who lived in areas that were flood affected. (Trishanjit Kaur, 2009)

Typhoons and hurricanes severely damaged libraries in 2005. In January of the year, a hurricane affected the archives in the city of Falkenberg, Sweden. It was flooded, as the strong winds pressed the sea-water up to a hitherto unseen level and due to a broken window uncontrolled water entered into the archives, which resulted in the damage of several hundred thousand archive boxes. (Cullhed, 2006)

Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 was one of the deadliest storms in the last 100 years and the costliest natural disaster ever to strike the United States. It assaulted the Gulf Coast with winds up to 140 miles per hour affecting Southeast Louisiana and two thirds of Mississippi. It affected a very large area and destroyed and damaged several libraries. Of the 188 public libraries in Louisiana, 23 were destroyed, 33 suffered severe damage and 37 more had moderate damage. In Mississippi 8 public libraries and 43 school libraries were destroyed. One of the libraries that the hurricane destroyed was the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library at Tulane University. The basement of the library was flooded for three weeks with 8 feet of water. A total of 700,000 items in the collection including print volumes, archival folders, recordings, microfilm reels and cards were damaged. More than 60% of the damaged collection was lost.

(Eberhart, 2005; Claerson & Long, 2006; Topper, 2011)

During a severe summer storm water collected outside the North Dakota State University Main Library, broke the window panes and entered the library. More than 4 feet of water mixed with sewage and petroleum products flooded the lower levels causing a damage of approximately \$2,000,000 to the collection and \$1,000,000 to furniture and equipment. **(Flood..., 2000)**

Yongquan Monastery in China which had a rare collection of ancient books was damaged due to typhoon Longwang in October 2005. Many of the documents were already infested with mould and the typhoon made the situation worse. More than 5,000 volumes of Buddhist classics were immersed in the water. The paper of the documents was fragile and was damaged by the muddy water. Particularly in the Blood Classics, a kind of Buddhist classics said to be written with the blood of the monks; the characters had faded. **(Pinhong, 2006)**

A natural disaster in the form of very heavy rains leading to flash floods occurred in the state of Maharashtra, India on and around 26 July 2005 damaging many libraries in the State. Narratives of 16 librarians reflected that more than 2 lakh items which also included rare Sindhi language manuscripts in one college library were

damaged. Library records and infrastructure of these libraries were also damaged. Similarly due to flash flood in the city of Surat, Gujarat, India resulted in loss of more than 2 lakh items in seven libraries. These libraries could not start their services as water did not recede for many days and staff could not reach the libraries. **(Zaveri, 2014)**

At the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, established in 1959 to train officers for the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service, a fire broke out in 1984 and destroyed, among other buildings and papers, its precious library rated amongst the best in the country Sundarayya Vignana Kendram, Hyderabad, India has two libraries: 1. The main Research Library having a rich collection of rare books, journals, newspapers, reports, pamphlets, manuscripts, private papers, and other materials in different languages from the 12th through 20th centuries. 2. The Urdu Research Centre Library having a valuable collection in Urdu language and literature. Both these libraries were affected due to unusual heavy rains during the week of 21 August 2000 which caused severe flooding in Hyderabad. The flood reached its peak on Thursday 24 August 2000 when a fifteen-foot wall of water inundated much of the city. Flooding ravaged the Sundarayya Vignana Kendram building which housed the two invaluable library collections. Within minutes

both collections were completely submerged in water. (Sundarayya....., 2000)

In the unique experience of the devastating flood of the Barak Valley, Assam, in the year 2004, all the major libraries in the downstream areas were completely flooded and damaged. (Satpathy, 2007)

DISASTER MANAGEMENT FOR LIBRARIES

Eden and Mathew (1996) define disaster as an incident which threatens human life/ or/ and damages or threaten to damage a library building, collections, equipment and systems.

The Dictionary for Library and Information Services (2005) defines a disaster plan as a set of written procedures prepared by the library staff in advance to deal with an unexpected occurrence that has the potential to cause injury to personnel or damage to equipment or to collections and/ or to facilities sufficient to warrant temporary suspension of services.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR DISASTER PREVENTION

1. Remote Sensing Technology,
2. Geographic Information System,
3. Global Positioning System,
4. Forecasting and Warning System,
5. Communication Technology,
6. WWW and Internet.

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