THE NEEDS FOR DISASTER CONTROL PLANNING IN LIBRARIES

by

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ABSTRAK

Kertas ini membincangkan beberapa bencana yang menimpa perpustakaan disebabkan alam semula jadi dan buatan manusia. Semua perpustakaan perlu mengadakan satu pelan teliti untuk mengelakkan dari berlakunya bencana. Ini adalah untuk mencegah dan mengurangkan kejadian yang tidak diingini berlaku dan melindungi bahan dari dimusnahkan. Ia juga bagi memudahkan usaha-usaha untuk menyelamatkan dan memulihkan bahan yang dirosakkan dapat dilaksanakan dengan cepat dan berkesan.

In this paper the objectives of the writer are:

* To achieve an overview of the theory of disaster control planning
* To achieve an insight into good practice in disaster control planning
* To investigate and identify particular factors which libraries need to consider in the design and implementation of a disaster control plan and disaster management.
* To promote awareness to policy makers, administrators and librarians of the importance of having a well-planned overall disaster plan for each library

DEFINITION

The definition of a disaster in libraries and archives is “an event or occurrence which is wholly unexpected and damages, or seriously threatens to damage the collections of an institution” 1. A recent definition of disaster by John McIntyre is “an event whose timing is unexpected and whose consequences are seriously destructive” 2.

Disaster Planning is a set of rehearsed actions which will minimise the effect of a disaster, whatever its magnitude, on the library and will assists in restoring the library and its collections to a usable in as short as time as possible 3.

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KINDS OF DISASTERS

Unquestionably, one of the most satisfying developments in conservation management was the realisation that although disasters occur with distressing frequency the effects of these misfortunes can often be minimised and recovery expedited by sensible advance planning. The frequency and variety of disasters is awesome. No one, even those in new buildings of modern construction, is completely safe from these unwanted natural or man-made misfortunes. Most library disasters happen when libraries are unattended or have minimal staffing or security personnel.

Disasters that strike libraries are of three kinds:

- **Natural**
  
  This kind of disaster includes floods, earthquakes and cyclones.

- **Man-Made**
  
  These are caused by Man for destruction and vandalism. They encompass theft, mutilation, war and arson. An American Library Crime Research Project (ALCR) distinguishes four (4) kinds of thefts in libraries.

First, **theft of books**. Research shows the number of books stolen from libraries to be enormous. One American study from that there were 250,000 books stolen from 100 libraries per annum, which works out an average at about 2,500 books per library per year.

Second, is the **theft of reference material**, and this includes the theft of rare books. This type of crime is more systematic in the sense it is probably more carefully planned involving selected books targeted by professional collectors. Unfortunately, this type of crime is likely to increase as the value of those books continues to rise.

**Theft of equipment** is the third kind of theft. It is less significant overall though not likely to remain so as libraries move to more sophisticated monitoring and checkout devices as well as more sophisticated equipment for readers.

The fourth category of theft could be called **other thefts** and it includes theft from patrons and various forms of criminal damage direct to library premises. Among the four categories above, book theft is the most crucial and dangerous.

A national survey on theft and loss from UK libraries in 1992 for the Home Office with the assistance of the National Preservation (NPO) of the British Library. The National survey elicited 727 responses from over 1,000 public, academic and specialist libraries to gather data on their stock checking practice and losses these reveal; their experience of theft and mutilation and the preventive techniques they employ and their general perceptions of these problems. Some of the main findings derived from the inquiry and implication of theft and mutilation are as follows:

* Counting practices in the UK libraries surveyed are poor; more than a quarter (28%) never carry out comprehensive inventories or counts, even over long periods of time.

* Losses differ between public library sectors. The average loss rate for public libraries alone was 5.3 %, while the losses recorded by academic and specialist libraries were lower, at 1.9 % and 2.1 %

* Overall, the book losses revealed by counts in the libraries surveyed reflect a national loss (though not necessarily a replacement cost) in excess of 150 million pounds each year. This figure is 50% higher than previous estimates.
The principle on the preventive actions taken by libraries were:

* Many of those who do carry out inventories and counts derive little direction from them on the preventive actions required. The inadequacies of methods short of title by title entries impose severe limitations on the primitive process, because they cannot furnish details of precisely what has been lost.

* Book recovery visits to borrowers homes either by independent agents, or by library staff themselves have now grown to be more commonplace. About a quarter of practitioners believe they have a very good payoff. Those making home visits are extremely selective, but many have developed local ‘formula’ that persuade borrowers to return items.

* The ‘tagging’ of library materials has become increasingly common place. The survey found that just over a third of all libraries have security systems and two-thirds of users believed they were successful.

* There is little evidence that the control of theft and mutilation is universally viewed by library professionals as a valued objective. Only about one in five libraries has developed a security policy.

Vandalism

The term vandalism become more generally applicable to the wilful or malicious destruction or defacement of things of beauty or of private property. Literature certainly remains vulnerable to such activity both in terms of public or private buildings which often housed it, and also the texts of individual volumes. The most common kind of vandalism which libraries suffer from involves broken windows, graffiti and minor acts of damage to buildings, cars, fences and so on. But the problem does not stop there. In addition, libraries are likely to suffer other kinds of destruction due to the nature of their operations and facilities. The intentional mutilation of books and other resource materials is one such problem.

Susan Lacey has categorised vandalism into the following groups: acquisitive vandalism, tactical vandalism vindictive vandalism and play group vandalism.

With these of vandalism which are a real menace to the libraries and their collection, librarians should be aware of this threat and take measures to protect the holdings of their libraries. Therefore, it is important for any library to include measures to encounter vandalism in the disaster plan.

Mutilation

Mutilation is defined as the departure of a limb or essential part by excision. As the case of vandalism, mutilation is another form of threat to the library collections and it should be considered when preparing a disaster plan for the library. Mutilation is caused by several factors. Some library users are so confident of their intellectual abilities that they feel entitled to amend or criticise a text which displeases them, or they could be selfish and can convince themselves that their needs is greater than that of anyone else to the extent that they feel justified in removing an article from a journal. Mutilation maybe inspired by similar motives to vandalism, selfish acquisition for personal use, removal of items on ideological grounds and for vindictive reasons.

It is widely recognised that the absence of photo-copying facilities could increase the possibility of mutilating library materials. Mutilation increased when electronic security systems were introduced to libraries. Usually people steal items from the library because they wish to read them. As security devices remain vulnerable to theft more and more pages and articles disappear. Also when text books in academic libraries are on a reading list, the possibility of mutilation by students can be high.
THE NEED FOR A DISASTER PLAN

As seen from the records of history, every library might have a disaster. Surveys have shown that some sort of disaster is inevitable. It is rather ironic that the myth that disasters are caused by natural forces has prevailed for many years. The truth is that most disasters are caused by human incompetence.

Undertaking disaster planning is one of the most important decisions a librarian can take to protect the library’s collections. Disaster Control Planning is the term used to describe the counter measures which can be on a large or small scale according to the needs, ability or financial resources of a library. Disaster planning is perhaps a misleading term also for what is now an accepted part of every library’s preservation programme. Disaster Control Planning is in essence a set of rehearsed actions which will minimise the effect of a disaster, whatever its magnitude, on the library and will assist in restoring the library and its collections to a useable condition in a short time as possible.

Disaster planning should encompass both preventive measures and mechanism for response and recovery after any disastrous event. Disaster planning consists also of taking positive measures to counter the threat of disaster by:

(a) Taking action to remove and minimise the threats

(b) Providing organised resources to react to an event should it occur, with objective of minimising damage and loss.

The primary objective of disaster planning is to prevent or reduce the likelihood of incidents occurring and to protect material and facilitate the rescue of damaged items as speedily and efficiently as possible.

It would be unrealistic to think disaster could be completely prevented. However, a great deal could be done to prevent some of them happening, to reduce their effects on the collections when they do happen and to minimise the damage caused to those items which become affected. To do this it is necessary to apply preventive measures to establish emergency procedures, hold emergency equipment and supplies in readiness, arrange for the necessary backup services to be made available and for staff and disaster teams to be fully conversant with and trained in disaster reaction, or in other words, disaster planning.

In addition to guidance on the planning process, a number of model plans have been produced which may help librarians in the production of plans for their own libraries. For example in 1983, a disaster control plan was produced for the National Library of Scotland. A model plan was also produced by the British Library, as the second stage of a research project, the first part of which had surveyed the extent of disaster planning in libraries and archives in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

So, a disaster plan is an essential element in preventive preservation. The best protection against disasters is to make every attempt to minimise the likelihood of their happening. Disaster plans require that library house-keeping is regularly performed, that library buildings are appropriately constructed and fitted out and that they are regularly maintained and that the library’s staff are well trained. A disaster plan is simply one aspect of good library administration practice.

Not all libraries have a disaster plan, although there is no doubt that all, whatever their size and type, should have one. It was not until the late 1970s that it could be said that disaster planning was widely recognised as an essential part of good library management, and more libraries throughout the world launched planning and implementing disaster contingency procedures. To give an illustration, a survey was carried out in 1993 on preservation policies and conservation in British libraries: a ten years review 1983 - 1992. This indicated that out of 488 libraries only 143 (23.9%) reported having a disaster control plan (written or otherwise)-(24 public libraries, 66 academic and 53 special).
The publicity which followed a number of recent major library disasters, including fires at the Los Angeles Public Library and the Library of the Academy of Science of the previous USSR in Leningrad in the mid and late 1980s, second, the informative and authoritative publications from the National Library of Scotland and the British Library which included major model disaster control plans, and third, the efforts of the National Preservation Office, have all served to focus on an issue which was formerly neglected.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE DISASTER PLAN**

A detailed objectives of a Disaster Plan are as follows:

- To lessen the potential for loss by anticipating the possibilities and appropriately them reducing them wherever possible.
- To assure that agencies, both private and public, who will be called in during an emergency understand the nature of the library’s collections and its priorities.
- To establish normal conditions after a disaster promptly and efficiently.
- To lessen the chances of recurrence by taking advantage of experience gained.
- To assure that adequate orientation and training have been given to the staff and that this training is updated on a regular basis.
- To assure frequent inspection by appropriate agencies to prevent changed conditions from having a deleterious effect upon the safety of buildings.

**THE ROLE OF LIBRARY MANAGEMENT IN DISASTER PLANNING**

Planning for one disaster maybe the same, or very similar for other disasters. Similar to common recovery steps for different disasters, a common thread of management responsibilities and activities also winds its way through the disaster planning process. Library management should take the following actions to ensure that contingency planning will work when needed no matter what specific disaster is being planned for.

These actions are:

* Making sure that management controls and supports the contingency planning process.
* Assigning proper authority and responsibilities to appropriate personnel to ensure that the contingency planning and execution process work.
* Determining the specific contingencies that are likely to impact the firm.
* Developing proper contingency plans for each phase of the disaster.
* Ensuring the contingency plans are known and can be accomplished when needed.
* Arranging in advance for necessary agreements with a variety of outside organisations.
* Co-ordinating the contingency planning and execution stage with outside organisation.

The development of the disaster plan depends on a number of factors such as the size of the library, the number of staff and whether any special funding is available. If possible, the plan should be developed co-operatively by library staff. There are many positive benefits of such co-operative activity, including an increase in the general awareness of all library staff and a greater knowledge of the aims of the institution.
THE DISASTER CONTROL PLAN

Prevention

The familiar saying prevention is better than cure is aptly applied to disaster planning. Prevention is composed of five (5) components: identification of the potential threats, reducing the risk of threats, back-up policy, preventive measures in constructing new library buildings and finally staff training.

Identification of potential threats

It is achieved through survey of hazards. The disaster plan should contain details of what the surveys are to note and how they are to be carried out. It is helpful to develop standard forms to be used which make the task easier and assure uniformity and objectivity of information.

Survey of hazards are of three kinds: external, internal, and environmental.

Reducing the risks of threats

Measures should be taken to reduce threats risks, need to be deployed. These measures are against fire and flood risks. These may include the ban and restriction of smoking, providing a primary fire extinguishing system, installation of detection and alarm systems. Potential flooding hazards such as gutters and roofs should be examined regularly and maintained in good order. If re-design and alteration can reduce or remove any of these hazards then this must be done.

Protection of records and back up policy

Another category of preventive actions is making back-up or duplicate copies of significant materials are relevant here: administrative materials (such as inventories of the collections like catalogue) and significant material in collections.

Duplication, is the creation of extra copies to provide a back-up to the records segregated as vital. There are several methods of duplicating records, the most common are: photocopying, carbon copy, microfilm, magnetic tapes, floppy discs or diskettes, hard discs, optical discs.

As for back-up of computer systems, all back-up discs should be kept separately from the hardware. This includes programme discs. If possible the discs should be kept in a separate building or at least in a fireproof safe, and one copy of most programme discs should be made which will be kept with hardware in case of any software crashes. Many organisation run a ‘two stage’ back-up routine. Back-up are made daily and those discs stored with the machine. A weekly back-up is also made and stored in a separate building.

With respect to protecting the records, there are two methods: either on site storage or off site or remote storage. A number of factors to take into account in the selection of storage site include: (a) Security (b) proximity of fire and police protection (c) adequate temperature and humidity levels within the storage (d) ease of communications such as by telephone, road etc between the office (e) economy and (f) adequacy of record services.

The important decisions relating to the process of identifying the vital records of the organisation, process for implementing the vital records management programme as well as the protection methods developed for the vital records should be document in a manual which should be incorporated into the disaster control plan.

Preventive Measures in Constructing New Library buildings

Another effective way to protect disasters is in careful planning for new library buildings. Librarians should demand from the architects and the engineers good preventive measure and design. Buildings should be designed to prevent strong light from damaging collections and fading furnishings. If windows are present, glass should be installed instead of shutters or grille work to reduce weather, pollution, insect and would hazards. Environmental control systems could be planned for specific needs and climates and placed in areas away from collections to reduce potential damage.
Environmental control systems could be planned for specific needs and climates and placed in areas away from collections to reduce potential damage. Heating and ventilating equipments should have the proper safety mechanisms including the capacity to shut down immediately in case of fire and smoke.

Serious consideration should be given to the materials used in the construction of the building as well as the furniture. Non-combustible materials which have undergone fire safety testing, could help in preventing fire from spreading. However, cost considerations should be undertaken in building construction. All buildings have cost limitations. In this case, the librarian should in consultation with the architect come out with a priority list of materials to be used to ensure that a sound well designed library building is constructed. In the case of lack of funds, priority should be given for a well equipped building in respect of preservation and the aesthetic aspect should be of secondary importance.

Staff Training

Staff training is a vital component of a good disaster prevention and contingency planning within an organisation. It involves essentially two groups of personnel. (i) All members of staff and (b) a special group within the organisation designated as the disaster control team.

For the first group, the training should instruct the personnel on how to respond to disaster confidently and with least panic. Drills must be carried out as part of the training programme. Newly recruited staff as part of their orientation programme could be introduced to the important areas of their working environment such as fire exits and the location of fire fighting equipment and taught how to use the hand held fire extinguishers to suppress small fires. They should also be made aware of evacuation procedures and the methods of altering other staff in case of disaster like the outbreak of fire.

For the second group, the disaster control team, the education and training should be specialised in nature and more concentrated. The topics discussed will include among others (a) fire suppression techniques (b) response process and (c) salvage procedures and techniques. This team is responsible to lead other staff when a disaster occurs. They should be well trained and able to respond immediately to do salvage work and to control the situation when disaster strikes.

It is also essential that the personnel of the organisation should be sensitised to the fact that a disaster can occur. Proper attention to prevention and protection hazards as well as appropriate reaction to emergency situations can make a significant difference in reducing damage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Library budgets must provide funds to achieve an acceptable disaster control plan. Contingency plans for fire and water disasters must be drawn, and insurance coverage must be included in this plan. On the practical side, doors and windows should be made as vandal resistant as possible. Direct connection with security authorities should be established.

The whole disaster plan will require inspection and revision periodically as phone numbers, services and technologies changes. It is useful to include a mechanism for updating as part of the general instructions for implementing the plan.

The manager is well advised to have a plan which anticipates a partial or total failure of Information Technology (IT) security as such failure may occur not only through wrongdoing, but also though natural events. Reacting and adjusting to such problems may involve using alternative systems and equipment on site, or even the transfer of operations to other locations, depending on the scale of operations and degree of failure.

The plan should allocate responsibilities and prescribe actions to be followed. In short, who does what and how. Its objectives should, in the first place to be minimise the damage and or loss of the operation together with limiting impairment to the service and to enable operations to be restored as fully as possible and as quickly as possible.
plan should be tested and refined so that it works perfectly and properly. The plan should be dynamic and evolve with change of events also. Finally, a strategy and mechanism for controlling the organisation’s vulnerability to computer misuse and crime, based on the assessments of the threats and potential losses need to be worked out.

**PLAN OF ACTION**

As everybody is aware, library buildings and materials can be damaged by fire, smoke, water, humidity and vandalism. Steps must be taken to investigate such threats. All libraries including the National Library of Malaysia should study these problems as they relate to the library and develop a ‘Plan of Action’ for each of the problem. A prerequisite for the development of the plan should be a firm commitment to the need for and the benefits to be realised from the plan.

The resulting plan should include: a statement of library policy on the matter, procedures to be followed, the designation or assignment of library personnel to implement each portion of the plan. The plan should be incorporated in the organisation’s overall preservation policy and other appropriate policy documentation.

**CONCLUSION**

Disaster of great scale have revealed dramatically to the world the vulnerability of books, documents and data, and focussed attention on the effort that was needed to save them. Much of the literature written for librarians in the light of the Florence catastrophe, has concentrated primarily on water damage, either from a flood, burst pipe or water in the extinguishing of a fire. As a consequence of these developments, the importance of disaster planning and the needs for access to information on the salvage of materials was increasingly recognised.

Disaster planning for a library is a library responsibility, but it cannot be done in a vacuum. Facilities and security personnel should be involved, both to provide training, instructions on whom to call when and for what, and for mutual understanding of needs and problems. It is entirely possible that librarians do not realise that plans do exist. Maintenance managers are in position to remind librarians of the danger and possible resulting damage of disasters and to be helpful in initiating this type of planning.

Gradually, as conservators, librarians and archivists share experience, innovations and experiments, the body of literature available in the field to aid in disaster prevention, preparedness and actions is growing. New techniques and ideas are implemented, and recovery from disaster become not only a possibility, but a probability. More time and care to plan carefully are needed so that great proportion of their collections could be saved in case of disaster.

It is clear that institutions differ in their needs for prevention and protection and in their abilities to call upon resources and services in response to a disaster. The thing to be emphasised is that there is no one correct Disaster Plan or way of being prepared. Sensible, thoughtful planning and realistic preparedness will provide the best protection for the library collections.
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