



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

International Journal of Current Research
Vol.3, Issue, 4, pp.284-288, April, 2011

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH**

REVIEW ARTICLE

TOWARDS ESTABLISHMENT OF A FULL-FLEDGED DISASTER MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT FOR MOI UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 15th December, 2011
Received in revised form
17th January, 2011
Accepted 13th March, 2011
Published online 27th April 2011

KEY WORDS:

Disaster management policy,
Library management,
University Libraries,
Moi University,
Moi University Libraries,
Types of disasters,
Modern technology,
Management

ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the key issues that underpin the establishment of Disaster Management (DM) department for Moi university libraries. The findings are based on data collected from Moi University community. Data was collected by use of interviews, observation and document analysis. The study aimed to: find out if there are disaster cases that relate to Moi University libraries; ascertain measures that have been undertaken to curb such disasters and establish the effectiveness of those measures in curbing disaster occurrences in university libraries. This study established that university libraries are faced with several moribund disaster threats such as: fire, water, heavy storms, earthquakes, burst water reservoir and pipes, hardware failure, sabotage, student riots, and terrorist attacks. The study also established that measures that have been taken to curb disaster occurrence in university libraries have not been very effective. It recommends the establishment of disaster management policy with a budget allocation part of which the library management could use to develop a specific policy for the library.

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INTRODUCTION

The alarming rates at which disasters occur in the world today and Kenya in particular, are forcing organisations to re-think on ways of managing them. Reviewed literature has shown that disaster cases have not only become common but complex in nature due to various reasons such as technological advancement and increased population with stagnating resources - leading to overuse some of them and thus impacting negatively on the environment. It has been observed by UN (2003) that the frequency and severity of natural disasters continue to increase, affecting, on average, around 200 million people, per year, losing their homes, land and access to jobs. In this regard, gradually, natural disasters have come to pose a threat to the gains made by development (ibid.). UNDP (2003) advocates for the inclusion of disaster risk considerations in all phases of national development planning, in particular for capacity building in disaster prone countries, in accordance with the goals of the international strategy for disaster reduction. This has been captured within the framework of millennium development goals number one on eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. It is worth noting that efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger are frequently setback by conflict and natural disasters as observed by UN (2005).

Universities are the main generators of employment and information. They too are the main disseminators of information since they conduct a lot of research. University libraries which are the heart of academic institutions and the guardian of the social memory have the components of information collection in a variety of formats which must be managed to protect them against destruction from any sort of disaster which only become possible where disaster management is taken seriously.

Definition of operational terms

Disaster Longman dictionary of contemporary English (2003) defines disasters as 'a sudden event such as a flood, storm, or accident which causes great damage or suffering'. 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'. Hiatt (2000) defines a disaster as 'an occurrence that disrupts the functioning of the organisation resulting in loss of personnel, loss of business or loss of time. Hiatt summarises the meaning of disaster by stating that any event that interrupts business due to loss or denial of information required for normal operations qualifies to be a disaster. Considering the foregoing definition(s) of disaster(s) it can be concluded that any sudden unexpected or gradual unnoticeable occurrences that literally cause: death of personnel, loss of information either due to document mutilation or theft, transfer computer viruses, damage of

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information materials as a result of water soaking the information materials and loss of business or damage of property such as a building, computers, furniture, books and so on, in our context of this paper, qualify to be a disaster.

Management

This study adopts the definition of management by the Longman dictionary of Contemporary English (2003), which defines management as ‘the activity of controlling and organising the work that a company or organisation does’.

Disaster Management

Disaster management has been defined by Sikich (2004) as ‘plans that ensure a continuity of operation and it involves compliance, preparedness, information management, training and resource management while providing for effective co-ordination of activities among organisations, warning and instructions to all concerned if a crisis occurs, assessment of actual and potential consequences and continuity of business operations during and immediately after the crisis.’ It is important therefore to state that since disasters do occur when list expected or in other words, they ring no bell, it is important to prepare for any eventuality by undertaking disaster management.

Types of disasters

Charlotte (2000) classifies disasters into four broad categories namely, those caused by Accidents e.g. as a result of loss of power, fire outbreak caused by electricity e.g. due to exposed wires, or voltage overload. Natural calamities such as those caused by earthquakes, floods, and lightning. Internal disasters e.g. those caused by sabotage, theft and employee violence. Army conflict which is caused by terrorism, and civil unrest. Technological advancement e.g. the use of computers has brought about disasters such as computer vandalism and computer viruses.

Economic Implications of Disasters

Disasters have got serious economic implications. For instance, Schneid and Collins (2001) state that economic damages from natural disasters have tripled in the first 30 years, rising from forty billion dollars in the 1960s to 120 billion dollars in 1980 whereby they cited an example of hurricane Andrew where they stated that in 1992 it cost 30 billion dollars in damages according to WHO report. Another example cited in the Daily Nation of Tuesday, July 17, 2007, p.1, is that an earthquake flattened houses in northwest Japan, killing at least seven people and sparking a small radiation leak and fire at the world’s biggest nuclear power plant. In Kenya, for example, a library of Kitale Technical Institute was burned down losing resources worth 7 million Kenyan shillings according to The Daily Nation, 15th February, 2007. Other disasters that have impacted negatively on Kenya’s economy include The bombing of American embassy by terrorists; Tribal clashes of 1992; The land or mudslides that have killed many people and led to loss of resources worth billions of money between Kakamega and Nandi rock in Western Province; and An earthquake that occurred in Nairobi as a result of volcanic eruption in Tanzania (The Standard Newspaper, 19th July, 2007) Recovery after disasters have occurred is very expensive and time consuming. It

deprives a nation a lot of resources leading to psychological stress especially where people lose their lives. After the occurrence of some disasters it is not possible to restore the situation back to its original state.

Statement of the problem

The Moi University libraries have adopted modern technologies (ICT) for the management of their information systems. Those technologies have brought about new types of disasters which were not common 30 years ago. Such disasters are related to computer viruses, vandalism, power outage and surges that destroy computers thus losing data. Moi University libraries collect, preserve and disseminate information materials some of which are rare in nature e.g. cultural artefacts, theses, donated information materials from organisations such as world bank, united nations and so on. The world at large is experiencing resource cutbacks so it is important to protect the available resources for sustainable development which can only become possible through disaster management which is also supported by the MDGs which Kenya being a member of United Nations has ratified. Moi university libraries are prone to various disasters such as student riots, fire outbreaks; heavy storms; pipe and water reservoir bursts; roof leakages due to heavy rains; and damages by insects and animal pests. These challenges definitely call for the need for an establishment of a disaster department for Moi university libraries.

Aim of the study

The study aimed at investigating the key issues that would underpin the establishment of a disaster management department for Moi university libraries. It also sought to establish factors that hinder an establishment of such a department and make suggestions on what could be done to establish it.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to Find out if there are disaster cases that have affect Moi university libraries Identify measures that have been taken whenever disasters occur Establish effectiveness of the measures take in curbing disasters in Moi University Establish the existence of a unit or department for managing disasters in Moi university libraries Identify factors that hinder the establishment of DM unit or department for Moi university libraries Suggest practical solution(s) to the problem of the study Make recommendations towards the establishment of DM department

Assumption of the study

This study was based on the assumption that: Disasters do occur in Moi university libraries. There is need to manage disasters in Moi university libraries

Significance of the study

This study creates awareness on the importance of disaster management for university libraries. It also highlights various types of disasters that affect Moi university libraries – an important factor in drawing a disaster control plan. The study

is important in the sense that it shade identifies the problems encountered in the process of establishing the DM department for Moi university libraries.

Scope of the study

The study focuses on Moi university community; and more so on Moi University management - the policy makers and implementers; library management who are decision and policy makers for university libraries; supervisors of library security checkers; chief security officer and fire officer as key informants.

Limitation of the study

Disaster management for libraries is still a new concept in Africa and especially in Kenya, so getting information materials for literature review was not easy.

Theoretical framework

This study was based on contingency theory which is a core function of preparedness. The theory allows for early arrangement of activities before a crisis occurs. The theory too is applicable where effects of disasters cannot be taken for granted and it enables an organisation to have safety measures when faced with problems.

Why contingency theory?

Libraries are dynamic organisations that keep on changing, e.g. from manual systems to computerised systems, from personal computers (standalone) to network environment and to virtual libraries, etc. Such changes have brought about complex disasters caused by ICTs. The theory gives practical directions to real life issues by emphasising situational appropriateness and therefore, it quite appropriate for libraries in terms of preparedness in case a disaster occurs..

Research designs

The study used survey research method. The study population comprised of the Moi university management, the library management and the key informants that included the supervisors of library security checkers, chief security officer and the fire officer. The target population was purposely chosen because they were expected to be the right people with the right information, so no sampling method was applied. At the time of study, there was one vice chancellor, two deputy vice chancellors, one Chief Administrative Officer and one Chief Academic Officer, one Finance Officer and one Principal for Chepkoilel campus, adding up to seven university management staff. There was also one University librarian, two deputy University librarians, and four heads of departments in (MTL) that is customer care, systems, technical services, special collection department; four in-charges of branch libraries (Chepkoilel campus, school of medicine town campus, school of law annex, SES Documentation Centre) adding up to eleven staff members directly working in the Library. There was also one (Chief security Officer, five supervisors of library checkers in main and branch libraries, and one university fire officer therefore adding up-to seven key informants. The whole population totalled to 25

respondents. In view of the small number of respondents, they were all purposely selected for interviews. Given the fact that the main researcher used one research assistant and the study was limited to one year in which data was collected and a report of research findings compiled, the population was manageable. Therefore, no sampling method was used to pick the respondents. Three research techniques were used to collect data. These include: interviews, observation and document analysis. The researchers prepared three interview schedules whereby the first one was used to interview Moi university management, the second interview schedule was used to interview library management and the third interview schedule was used to interview key informants. Two types of data were generated namely, statistical and descriptive. Analyses were carried out by use of a computer program called statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and electronic calculator to help the researchers save on time and energy in carrying out data analysis. Frequencies and percentages of some questions were then presented in textual and tabular form. Descriptive data were analysed using descriptive analysis.

Research findings

Out of a total of seven (100%) university management who were earmarked for the interview, only 5 (71.4%) were eventually interviewed. This gave a total of 71.4% response rate. All 11 (100%) library management staff earmarked for studies were interviewed - giving a response rate of 100%. Types of Disasters in Moi University Libraries The study found out that there are varied disasters in Moi university libraries. Those that were identified include Theft of information materials and computers Vandalism of smoke and fire detectors, sensors, fire extinguishers, water automatic systems and computers Loss of data due to computer viruses Soaking of print information materials caused by leaking roofs Destruction of computers because of power outage and surges caused by lightning and power overload Mutilation of information materials Air pollution caused by birds and sewerages Insects, pests and fleas that disturb library users Measures that have been Taken by both University and Library Management to Curb Disasters in Moi university Libraries It was apparent that some of the measures that have been taken to curb disasters cases in Moi University library include University management imposing stringent regulations on theft cases stealing library property e.g. information materials, computers or parts of computers Currently the university is recruiting and employing appropriate trained security personnel Since the area is prone to lightning, lightening arrestors have been installed some buildings. University management has sponsored in-house disaster management workshops and seminars, though on irregular basis, for library security checkers and library staff. Moi University has employed a fire officer to manage fire related disasters in the entire university Moi University has introduced disaster management courses in some university schools.

A library caretaker has been employed to oversee any disaster threats in the library and take preventive measures A photocopier has been installed within a library building to minimise information material mutilation. The research finding showed that despite the measures taken by the university management and library management to curb

disaster occurrences in university libraries, those measures have not become effective in mitigating disaster cases in the university libraries. In fact, one of the respondent when asked if measures taken are effective in curbing disaster cases in Moi university libraries, a typical response was 'despite the measures taken, there are still many theft cases which are becoming more complex in that people are now stealing computers or computer parts unlike before.'

Disaster Department for Moi university Libraries

This study established that by the year 2007, there was no established disaster management department for university libraries. But all library management staff strongly supported the establishment of a disaster management department for university libraries. One of the respondent stressed by stating that 'universities should consider establishing disaster management department specifically meant for libraries since libraries are affected by unique disasters which may not be viewed as disasters by people who do not understand the value of information required or lost'. Although all university management agreed that disasters be managed in the university, some proposed that instead of establishing a disaster management department for only libraries, they suggested that a disaster management department be established for the entire university.

Factors that Hinder the Establishment of a Disaster Management Department for University Libraries

This study found out that among the factors that hinder the establishment of DM department for university libraries are Lack of DM policy in the university Lack of awareness on the importance of DM for university libraries The presence of departments such as development unit, security unit, estates and maintenance department which have been responding to some disaster cases and have made university management relax with an assumption that even library resources are safe. Lack of finance given the fact that no budget has been created for disaster management in the university

Suggestions to Reduce the Stated Problems

On the basis of the foregoing findings, the following suggestions would reduce the disaster management problems facing university libraries. There is need to purchase computerized security systems which incorporate book detectors by using of barcodes or magnetic strip. It will be necessary to purchase Closed Circuit Television (CCTV). To be able to operate this unit it will be necessary to purchase digital cameras, recorders and monitors. To avoid disturbance of power by lightning, which is so common, there is a need to purchase a powerful Un-interrupted Power Supply battery/flywheel backup and to install lightning arrestors in all library buildings. It will be necessary to take severe disciplinary action against offenders by suspending, expelling or sacking them. It is necessary to identify one university staff preferably from a senior staff of the library and train them on how to handle disasters in the library so as to co-ordinate disaster programmes in the university libraries. There is need to create disaster awareness among university management and all library users. Convert by pass system entrances like the one in the Margaret Thatcher Library, at the main campus, into turn style entrances which allows one user to get out or get in

at a time. Purchase a modern fire engine since the existing one is an old type and is not currently in good conditions.

Recommendations to Enhance the Establishment of Disaster Management Department for Moi university Libraries

The following recommendations were made in regard to the need of establishing a disaster management department for university libraries The library management should create disaster awareness to university management, stakeholders and library users by setting up a disaster day in all libraries. Library management should write convincing proposals to the University management and other concerned parties which state the value of materials that could be lost through disasters. The university management should solicit for more funding from the government to enable the university management create a budget specifically for disaster management. They should also solicit for donations from organisations such as Red Cross Kenya, United Nations, and World Bank. The information professions in the university should take a key role in championing for the formulation of disaster management policies for university libraries and develop disaster management programmes since they understand the value attached to information and hence advise the university management on the importance of disaster management.

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