

## Disaster management in university libraries: Perceptions, problems and strategies

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### Abstract

*The ultimate aim of this paper is to explore disaster management in terms of its perception, problems and strategies in University libraries in South Eastern Nigeria. This paper employed a survey research design to gather information from libraries in selected University libraries in South Eastern Nigeria. Questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection and the data collected were analyzed using percentages, mean and standard deviation. The study has revealed that while some librarians are aware of disaster management, some others have low level of knowledge of it. The level of their knowledge on disaster management, notwithstanding, the respondents were of the opinion that University Libraries in South Eastern Nigeria should prepare for disaster management. Certain problems that affect disaster management were identified from this study and the most striking ones are lack of disaster preparedness and recovery plans. The study revealed a number of strategies that could be put in place to ensure effective disaster management which include training of firefighting equipment in offices and raising awareness of libraries on the need to protect documents from disaster. The paper concludes with a clarion call that University libraries the world over should take the issue of disaster preparedness and management very seriously*

### Introduction

The Library is the nucleus or heart of any institution, be it commercial, governmental or academic. Indeed, it is the nerve centre of academic institution. A well-equipped library is therefore very vital to the education and general information of the masses. The library is expected to aid in performing various roles such as research, education and information in the society. With the colossal amount of money spent on the development of a library, one expects that adequate arrangement will be made to protect the materials against disaster as the economic situation in the country bites harder, librarians should make changes in the various aspects of their professional practice to guard against disaster in any form. The preoccupation of the librarians at this period should be how to ensure the survival of the existing collection. However, it seems unfortunate and regrettable that library materials, library buildings and other facilities are not properly planned for against disaster occurrence by the parent institution, the librarians themselves or the government. By this act, it is viewed that this inadequate protection against disaster is jeopardizing the culture of the society and the future generation.

Disaster has been defined as an unexpected event that may drastically threaten the lives of humans or buildings, destroy the information infrastructure, disrupt and render documentary materials inaccessible to users, (Ngulube and Magazi, 2008). According to these authors, disaster cannot be entirely prevented, but there is need to be prepared for them so that their negative effects may be minimized. Disaster preparedness

