

Disaster Management at University Libraries: a Case Study at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura Library

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Abstract

Libraries are suffering significantly as a result of disasters, whether they are natural, man-made, or a combination of the two. The university library, which serves the university's teaching, learning, and research activities is no exception in facing disasters. The University of Sri Jayewardenepura is one of Sri Lanka's largest state universities, with eleven faculties. The University of Sri Jayewardenepura library is considered the knowledge centre of the university that provides information to all students and academic staff to fulfilling their information needs. The objectives of the study were to identify the past disasters experienced by the library, identify possible disasters in the library and explore the strategies used for disaster management. The descriptive survey research method was applied in the study. The population consisted of the entire library staff at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and the sample size was 62. Sixty-two copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 56 (90.32%) were received after filling. All of the 56 responses were used for the analysis of the study. The purposive sampling technique was used for semi-structured interviews. The telephone interview technique was used in the study. According to the purposive sampling method, only 6 participants out of the responded 56 were selected to be interviewed. The study concludes that incidents related to natural and man-made disasters happened in the library. Insect/rodent attacks and network breakdown disasters had the highest value of 54, representing 96.43% of respondents. About 53 (94.64%) identified electrical faults as a disaster at the USJ library. 53 (94.64%) respondents identified fire and water-related disasters other than floods in the library. According to the interview results, the main types of disasters that library staff expect are fire and water-related disasters. The library employs strategies for disaster prevention, such as performing routine building maintenance (including plumbing and electrical) 30 (53.57%) and employing an effective communication system 25 (44.64%).

Keywords: Academic libraries, Library disasters, Disaster Management, Natural disasters, Man-made disasters.