

Digital Information Resources for Disaster Management of Libraries and Information Centres

Bidhan Chandra Biswas¹
and
Sabuj Kumar Choudhuri²

Abstract

A library may procure contents in various sources and forms to serve their clients, particularly in the higher education and research institutes in the developed world to satisfy their urge for vital contents that inspire indigenous research. Libraries and information centres must take adequate measures to save their collection from natural or man-made hazards. To have a strong disaster management commitment for libraries and information centres, the role of digital information is most important. This paper begins with an understanding of disaster – the meaning, types and its groups- and then seeks to identify parameters to design and develop a successful disaster management plan, cited examples with images, provided various sources for digital information to mitigate it. For heralding better tomorrow, a concerted effort is needed in this regard.

Keywords: Disaster, Disaster management, Disaster management in libraries and information centres

What is Disaster?

A disaster is the tragedy of a natural or human-made hazard (a hazard is a situation which poses a level of threat to life, health, property, or environment) that negatively affects society or environment. The Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) in Brussels, Belgium, uses the following definition. “A disaster is a situation or event which overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to a national or international level for external assistance.”¹

In the Australian Emergency Management Glossary a disaster is defined as: “A serious disruption to community life which threatens or causes death or injury in that community and/or damage to property which is beyond the day-to-day capacity of the prescribed statutory

¹ Department of Library & Information Science, University of Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal, India. E-mail: bidhan_kly@yahoo.com

² Librarian, Basanti Devi College, Kolkata, West Bengal, India. E-mail: sabooj_c@yahoo.co.in

*authorities and which requires special mobilisation and organisation of resources other than those normally available to those authorities”.*²

Generally, disaster has the following effects in the concerned areas:

1. It completely disrupts the normal day to day life
2. It negatively influences the emergency systems
3. Normal needs and processes like food, shelter, health, etc. are affected and deteriorate depending on the intensity and severity of the disaster.

Thus, a disaster may have the following main features:-

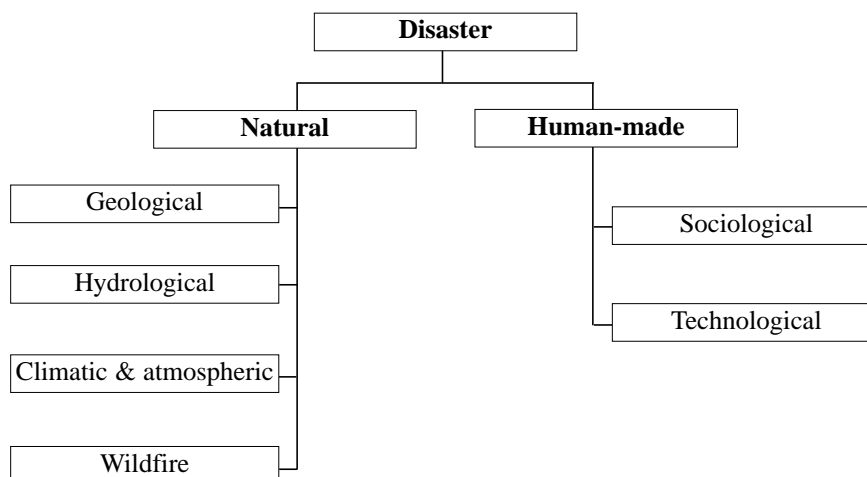
- ◆ Unpredictability
- ◆ Unfamiliarity
- ◆ Speed
- ◆ Urgency
- ◆ Uncertainty
- ◆ Threat

Thus, in simple terms we can define disaster as a hazard causing heavy loss to life, property and livelihood. e.g. a cyclone killing 10,000 lives and a crop loss of one crore can be termed as disaster. In contemporary academia, disasters are seen as the consequence of inappropriately managed risk. These risks are the product of hazards and vulnerability. Hazards that strike in areas with low vulnerability are not considered a disaster, as is the case in uninhabited regions.

Objectives of the Study

The disaster and the protection, preservation of the human civilization in the library is itself a great challenge. To address the problem, the role of information through various digital sources is the key point for the present study. A well informed and well designed disaster management plan can save the library from these catastrophic events.

Types of Disaster



Natural Disaster

A natural disaster is a consequence when a natural hazard (e.g., volcanic eruption or earthquake) affects humans. Human vulnerability, caused by the lack of appropriate emergency management, leads to financial, environmental, or human impact.

Human-made Disaster

Disasters caused by human action, negligence, error, or involving the failure of a system are called man-made disasters. Man-made disasters are in turn categorized as technological or sociological. Technological disasters are the results of failure of technology, such as engineering failures, transport disasters, or environmental disasters. Sociological disasters have a strong human motive, such as criminal acts, stampedes, riots and war.

Disaster and India

India has been traditionally vulnerable to natural disasters on account of its unique geo-climatic conditions. Floods, droughts, cyclones, earthquakes and landslides have been recurrent phenomena. About 60% of the landmass is prone to earthquakes of various intensities; over 40 million hectares is prone to floods; about 8% of the total area is prone to cyclones and 68% of the area is susceptible to drought. The loss in terms of private, community and public assets has been astronomical.

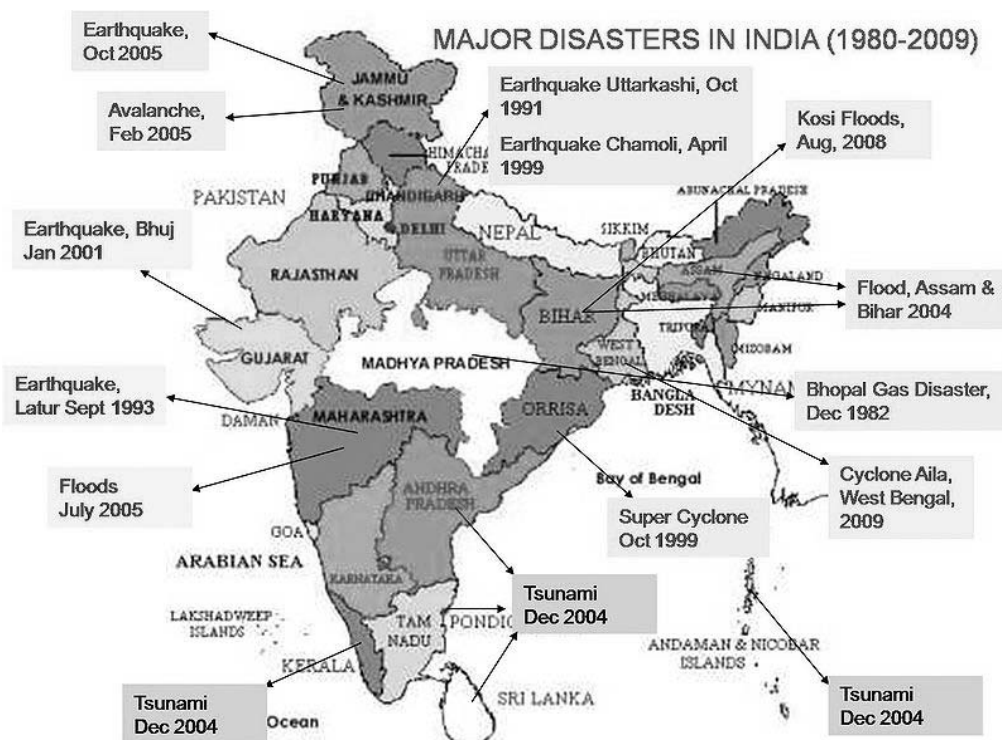


Fig.1 Major Disasters in India in the last 20 Years (1980-2009)

Human-made Disaster and the Library

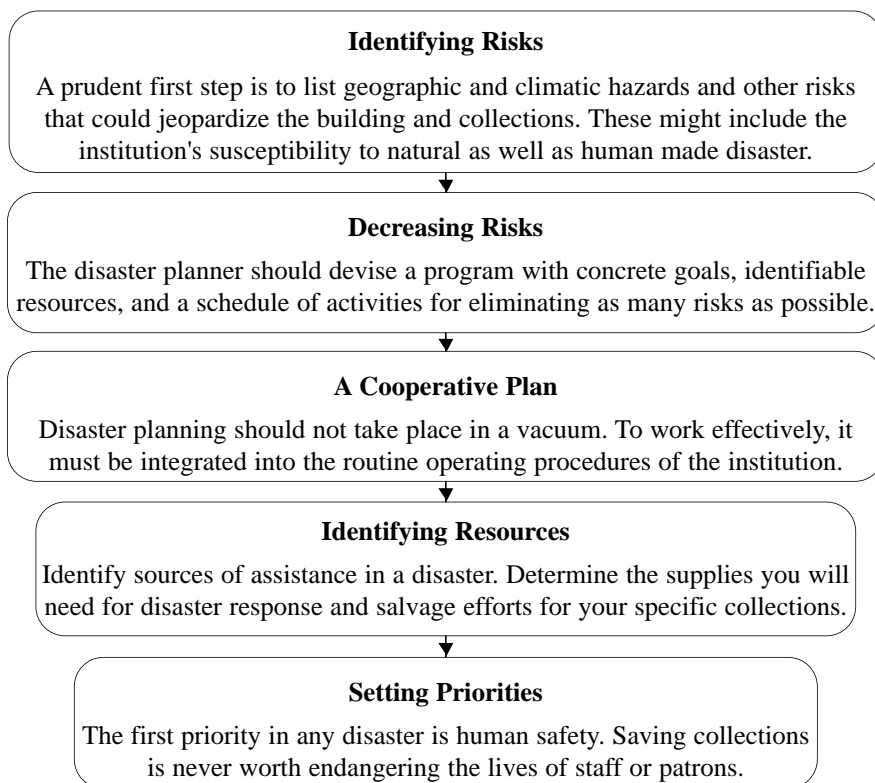
One million books, 10 million documents, and 14,000 archaeological artifacts have been lost in the U.S.-led invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq – the biggest cultural disaster since the descendants of Genghis Khan destroyed Baghdad in 1258.³

The International Committee of the Blue Shield declared on March 7, 2003, that “access to authentic cultural heritage is a basic human right” and that “Iraq is universally recognized to be especially rich in cultural heritage ... the loss of parts of that heritage would certainly represent a loss to all the peoples of the world.” It called upon all nations with the ability to do so to draw up detailed plans to protect Iraqi cultural infrastructure and to assess and repair any damage done to it. Under the auspices of the Middle East Library Association, Jeff Spurr of Harvard University’s Fine Arts Library has authored the most recent report on the condition of Iraqi academic libraries since the American invasion. Spurr reports that the “entire collection of 175,00 books and manuscripts at the library of the University of Baghdad’s College of Arts was reduced to ashes.”

Natural Disaster and the Library

Earthquake, flood, cyclones, tornadoes, hurricanes and other natural disasters do cause immense and irreparable damage to the libraries. A public library run by Mukti (An NGO) in Nagendrapur in South 24 Parganas (near the Sunderbans) that serves the remote villages has been fully damaged in recent Aila.

Disaster Management Plan for Libraries or Information Centre



Key Digital Information Sources

These Key information sources that address and respond to natural disasters provide links to valuable situation reports, media alerts and interactive mapping systems giving up to date information. It lists organizations and databases specializing in the complex events of a natural disaster.

Important Databases & Information Systems

Sahana

<http://www.sahana.lk/>

Sahana is an integrated set of web-based disaster management applications that provide solutions to large-scale humanitarian problems in the aftermath of a disaster. It is open-access and freely downloadable from this site.

The main applications built into Sahana and problems they address so far are as follows:

- missing person registry
- organisation registry
- request management system
- camp registry
- volunteer management
- inventory management
- situation awareness



Relief Web

http://www.reliefweb.int

The screenshot shows the ReliefWeb website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs for HOME, LATEST UPDATES, COUNTRIES & EMERGENCIES, APPEALS & FUNDING, POLICY & ISSUES, and PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES. Below this is a search bar and a 'GO' button. The main content area is titled 'DIRECTORY OF INFORMATION PROVIDERS' and includes a 'Show Organization' section with filters for 'Filter by Country' and 'Filter by Type', both set to 'All'. There are also links for 'Library-related websites', 'Map-related websites', 'Training-related websites', and 'Job-related websites'. A 'View by Alpha' section lists letters from A to Z.

International Recovery Platform

http://irp.onlinesolutionsltd.net

The screenshot shows the International Recovery Platform website. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, Login or Register, Contact Us, and RSS Feeds. The main header features the IRP logo and the text 'International Recovery Platform BETA'. Below the header is a navigation menu with tabs for About IRP, Countries and Disasters, Themes in Recovery, and Resources. The main content area includes a section for 'About IRP' with a 'View all' link, a featured article titled 'IRP Supports Recovery in the Philippines' with a 'Read more' link, and a 'What's New' section. There is also a 'Publications' sidebar with a link to 'The Sta Wenchu and Re Public C' and a 'Join the c' section.

Asian Disaster Reduction Centre

<http://www.adrc.asia>

ADRC
Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC)

Glossary on Natural disasters | Site Map | Japanese

Search

ADRC Top | About ADRC | Activities | Disaster Information | DRR Information of Member Countries | Events | Publications & Newsletter

TOP PAGE

What's new

- ADRC Highlight vol.200 [English]
- ADRC Highlight vol.192 [Russian]
- 2009/12/01
- 2009/10/09

The Latest Disaster Information

- 2009/11/29
On November 29, 2009. Saudi emergency services said on Sunday the death toll from floods that tore through the port city of Jeddah this week had risen to 103, with another 1,400 rescued, the state news agency reported on Sunday.

Online Resources

- GLIDE number
>> About GLIDE number
- SeninelAsia Project Disaster Management Support System
>> About Disaster Management Support System

National Sources

National Disaster Management Authority

<http://ndma.gov.in/ndma/index.htm>

Ministry of Home Affairs

<http://mha.nic.in/>

Disaster Management Dept, Bihar Government

<http://disastermgmt.bih.nic.in/>

OSDMA

<http://www.osdma.org/>

GSDMA

<http://www.gsdma.org/>

India Meteorological Department

<http://www.imd.ernet.in/>

National Disaster Management, Govt. of India

<http://www.ndmindia.nic.in/>

National Centre for medium Range Weather Forecast

<http://www.ncmrwf.gov.in/>

Water Resource Department

<http://www.orissawater.com/>

Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

<http://www.amcdrindia.com/>

International Sources

Alerting Humanitarians to Emergencies
<http://www.alertnet.org/>
Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/programs/emergenc/prev/prev_em.htm
Disaster & GIS related Information
<http://www.esri.com/hazards>
Disaster related News Service
<http://www.disasternews.net/>
Dundee Satellite Receiving Station
<http://www.sat.dundee.ac.uk/>
Earthquake related News from World news Service
<http://www.earthquakenews.com/>
Earthquake Related Information
<http://www.eqnet.org/>
Federal Emergency Management Agency
<http://www.fema.gov/>
Information about Emergency Planning & Response
<http://www.emergency-management.net/>
Information about Tropical Cyclones
<http://www.hurricanealley.net/>
International Association of Emergency Managers
<http://www.iaem.com/>
International Federation of Red Cross
<http://www.ifrc.org/>
National Institute of Urban Search & Rescue
<http://www.niusr.org/>
National Memorial Institute for Prevention of Terrorism
<http://www.mipt.org/>
Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org/>
The National Emergency Management Association, US
<http://www.nemaweb.org/>
United Nations Development Programme
<http://www.undp.org/>
USGS Database
<http://usg-georef.cos.com/>
US Geological Survey
<http://www.usgs.gov/>
US Navy
<http://www.npmoc.navy.mil/>
Weather Safety Tips
<http://www.w3.weather.com/safeside>

Bangladesh Journal of Library and Information Science

Academic and Research Institutions

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action

<http://www.alnap.org/publications/publications.htm>

Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters

<http://www.cred.be/>

Centre for Women's Global Leadership Rutgers, State University of New Jersey

<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu>

Centro Regional de Información sobre Desastres

http://www.crid.or.cr/crid/ing_index.shtml

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

<http://first.sipri.org/>

United States Institute of Peace

<http://www.usip.org/library/>

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

<http://www.uc3m.es/>

University of Minnesota

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/>

Yale University - The Diana Project

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diana/>

Governments and Intergovernmental Organisations

British Library

<http://www.bl.uk/>

National Library of Canada

<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/>

National Library of Australia

<http://www.nla.gov.au/>

Russian State Library

<http://www.rsl.ru/>

Non-Governmental Organizations

European Public Law Center

<http://www.eplc.gr/library/library.php>

InterAction

<http://www.interaction.org/library/index.php?mode=search>

Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/>

Women Waging Peace

http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/82_women_waging_peace_network.cfm

Other

Georgia: Directory of Humanitarian and Development Organizations

http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2001/ocha_geo_16mar.PDF

UN Agencies and International Organizations

Asian Disaster Reduction Center

<http://www.adrc.or.jp/>

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

<http://www.unhcr.org/static/research/library.html>

For a Better Tomorrow

Disaster planning is becoming an essential component of the overall management plan for a library and information centres. The importance of an effective disaster plan is regularly demonstrated in institutions which are strongly committed to their plans. There is ample evidence to indicate that to be effective, a plan must be incorporated into the day-to-day management of an institution. A well thought out and presented plan is useless if it exists solely as a document on a shelf.

Disaster planning is essential for any institution to provide the best possible protection for its collections. Disaster can strike at any time — on a small or a large scale — but if an institution is prepared with right information and the plan accordingly, the damage may be decreased or avoided. A disaster plan must be considered a living document. Its risk-assessment checklist must be periodically reviewed, its lists must be updated, and its collection priorities revised as needed. Always one thing should remember that without right information from the right sources no disaster plan can be successful. An effective disaster plan with strong information network and information system will do its best to insure that historical collections in our cultural institutions are safeguarded for the future.

References

1. Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (2009) [Online] Available from: http://www.md.ucl.ac.be/entites/esp/epid/misson/intro_uk.htm [Accessed 16th Dec. 2009]
2. Australian Emergency Management Glossary (2009) [Online] Available from: [http://www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/\(A96D9A49EA98CFE780B96F6EE5A027F4\)~Glossary.doc/%24file/Glossary.doc](http://www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/(A96D9A49EA98CFE780B96F6EE5A027F4)~Glossary.doc/%24file/Glossary.doc) [Accessed 16th December 2009]
3. Harding International Social Work (2007) *Man-made disaster and development: The case of Iraq* (50).pp 295-306
4. International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) (2009) [Online] Available from: <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2005/sep2005/libs-s17.shtml> [Accessed 16th Dec. 2009]
5. Sahana (2009).[Online] Available from: <http://www.sahana.lk/> [Accessed 14th Dec. 2009]
6. Reliefweb (2009).[Online]Available from: <http://www.reliefweb.int/> [Accessed 14th December 2009].
7. International Recovery Platform (2009).[Online] Available from: <http://irp.onlinesolutionsltd.net/> [Accessed 14th December 2009].
8. Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (2009).[Online] Available from: <http://www.adrc.asia> [Accessed 14th December 2009].
9. National Disaster Management Authority (2009). [Online] Available from: <http://ndma.gov.in/ndma/index.htm> [Accessed 14th December 2009].