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A Study on disaster preparedness on in university libraries in Sri Lanka

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This paper investigated the preparedness and awareness of staff of university libraries of Sri Lanka to control disasters. Questionnaire was used for collection of data. Data collected were analyzed using the quantitative methods such as percentage analysis, tabulations, diagramming and graphical presentations in this study. This study used the sample survey method. The targeted population of the study consisted of all university libraries (35) of Sri Lanka. Questionnaires were sent to librarians of university libraries. However, the overall response rate to the survey was 80%. This study pointed out that 17.9% of universities libraries have experienced from disasters such as fire and water (floods, leaks). In addition, some information sources have been lost due to thefts and insects. Even though some libraries had been fitted with disaster prevention equipments such as fire extinguishers and emergency exists; staff members do not know real techniques to use them.

It was revealed from the study that the university libraries of Sri Lanka are not very prepared to prevent, face and control disasters as a result of lack of training for the library staff members as well as users. However, there should be clear and concise notices pasted at every already recognized areas in libraries showing how staff, users and visitors should react to disasters when they strike. This study recommends that regular training of librarians and other staff members of the library on disaster management and prevention should be carried out. In addition, adequate funds should be given to the libraries to develop effective and efficient disaster preparedness plans by the University Grants Commission. Finally, it is recommended for the library to have a disaster control plan with skilful disaster management team since all respondents indicated that they do not have any disaster control plan in the library. Further, it suggests including “Library Disaster Management” as a subject module in the curriculum of undergraduate and postgraduate courses on Library and Information Science in Sri Lanka.

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