

## Book Review

**Disaster Planning for Libraries: Process and Guidelines**, by **Guy Robertson**; Chandos Publishing, London, 2015, ISBN 9781843347309, Paperback, 210 pages, US\$ 80.00.

In 2006, the IFLA-PAC (IFLA Core Activity on Preservation and Conservation) published a manual for the library and information professionals titled “IFLA Disaster Preparedness and Planning: A Brief Manual”, which introduced key concepts of disaster planning and disaster preparedness to the library administrators across the world. The manual identified certain elements in lifecycle of disaster planning, namely, risk assessment (identifying the sources of potential disaster), prevention and protection (managing the disaster risk), preparedness (getting ready to cope), reaction and response (when disaster strikes), and recovery (getting back to normal). The goal of this manual was “to ensure that library and archive materials, published and unpublished, in all formats will be preserved in accessible form for as long as possible.”

In the book under review, “Disaster Planning for Libraries: Process and Guidelines”, Guy Robertson explores the most robust techniques and best practices, which are already in place in certain libraries in the developed nations. The author narrates some communities of practice, and innovative techniques, as drawn from the visionary practitioners of the centuries-old libraries and library heritage/ preservation centres. The purpose of this book is to provide a practical guide to developing a comprehensive disaster plan for any library.

The book is organized into twelve key chapters, while the readers getting into details of each of the essential elements in disaster planning. The author begins with clarifying different commonly used terms related to the disaster in a library, such as incident, emergency, major emergency, disaster, catastrophe, and crisis. For example, an incident refers to “a minor breach of security, a small loss of data or a minor injury at a site”; whereas, a major emergency refers to “a serious casualty or casualties, extensive damage to a building or equipment that will involve serious inconvenience, or a power outage that disrupts operations for 24 hours” (p. xvii).

In the first chapter Libraries and Risk, the author describes different kinds of risks associated with libraries and information institutions. These include natural risks (e.g., flooding, fire, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, pests, volcanoes, pandemics, and drought), technological risks (e.g., power outages, IT failure, data loss, gas leaks, toxic spills, train derailments, transportation disruptions, and telecommunications disruptions), human risks (e.g., apathy, carelessness, forgetfulness, false assumptions,

inattention to details, ignorance of internal policies, inattention to laws and external regulations), proximity risks (e.g., neighbouring buildings, roadways, retail shopping areas, parking lots, air traffic, petrol stations, water bodies, and crime hotspots), security risks (e.g., theft, fraud or information theft, sabotage, workplace violence, hostile intruder, malware, and vandalism), and enterprise risks (e.g., sudden and deep cut to operating budgets, negative media coverage). All these threats might not have similar consequences if any of them happened to a library.

In the second chapter, the author describes different elements of disaster preparedness. In this phase, a key exercise called risk assessment and analysis (RAA) is to be carried out. Here an RAA report is generated for identifying risks, possible threats and their business impacts. The author identifies five steps in RAA, namely, history-taking, inspection, interviews, discussions with external experts, and documentation. He also suggested certain mitigation measures for overcoming the risks, viz., preventive maintenance programmes, a gradual replacement of older facilities, insurance, and data back-up.

The third chapter deals with the disaster response, where Robertson introduces a sample emergency response plan brochure. He further furnishes a sample damage assessment form in the chapter Damage Assessment, which is a detailed evaluation of damage to collections, buildings, furnishing, equipment, or stakeholders. In the sixth chapter, Robertson produces a sample Disaster Recognition and Declaration Procedures form, which emphasizes on information gathering and decision-making to declare a disaster.

In chapter ten titled Orientation and Training Programmes, Robertson argues, “If your disaster plan lacks an orientation and training programme for employees, you do not have a disaster plan”. He states that every library employee requires “orientation and training to ensure that disaster planning components are effective and that the library is prepared to deal with adverse circumstances of all kind”. Here he describes commonly used methods of delivery, which include home circulars, newsletter, intranet materials, staff orientation sessions, management orientation sessions, management security seminars, and training the trainers.

In chapter eleven titled Basic Tabletop Exercises, Robertson suggests a series of exercises which can be carried out in many libraries with minimal adaptation. His suggested exercises are outlined for the untoward events such as fire and associated risks, flooding/ water ingress, severe weather/ power failure, high winds and winter storms, toxic spill, power failure, data loss, and possible theft and misuse.

The book concludes with a set of six appendices reproducing sample plans from real life situations. The author enlists here elaborative or comprehensive plans of certain library institutions, such as Lancaster Gate Public Library Crisis Management Plan; Pandemic Management Program; Post-Disaster Security Plan; Disaster Manager's Kit: Ten Steps to Response, Resumption and Continuity; Post-Disaster Staff Allocation Plan; and Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan. These plans are very useful for designing disaster plans in libraries anywhere in the world, subject of local variations.

For different chapters, Robertson interviewed some library administrators working in different libraries across the world, but mostly from the developed nations located in North America and Europe. However, for the chapter one

he interviewed a school librarian in a rural district of southern India along with five others from the Global North. Throughout the book, the author has projected the views and practices as carried out in the Global North.

This book is an essential read for the library administrators managing significant library infrastructure. As the price of this book is not affordable to South Asian librarians, a low-cost South Asian edition is suggested.

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