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# AN EVALUATION OF RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

This study investigated the risks and risk management strategies adopted in selected academic libraries in Oyo state. A structured questionnaire was developed to elicit information from 60 respondents selected randomly from four academic libraries in the state. The study sought to provide answers to four research questions raised. Simple percentages were used to analyze the data obtained. The findings showed that fire outbreak, building collapse, flooding as well as risks associated with users top the list of risk factors and that risk management policies were not adequately provided in the surveyed libraries. Based on the findings, recommendations were made that risk management be incorporated into the strategic and operational planning processes at all levels of academic libraries and that risk assessments be conducted on all new equipment and facilities and that risks should be identified, reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis at nominated levels within library system.

**Key words:** Risk, Management, Management Strategies, Academic Libraries, Oyo State

## INTRODUCTION

Recent trend in academic libraries in Nigeria demands for change both in the way they work and the information and materials they provide. This change tends to be greeted by feelings of insecurity and visions of ongoing chaos from the sides of librarians and users alike. The essence and relevance of academic libraries are increasingly at risk. The generality of library users expect more from the library due to the growth of information available through electronic resources. As the changes in higher education are moving, librarians are responding to these systematic changes in the academic environment. Changing roles for librarians as collaborators, integrators, instructional designers and information consultants and models of information delivery necessitated not only increased relation between user-librarian contacts, but also dramatic changes in the nature of their relationships. The need for understanding of different techniques in procuring content, management of content, rights of access, collection development policies, etc. with risk associated with managing different activities in academic libraries, facilities as well as services offered are the main focus of this work.

Risk management according to Alegbeleye (1993) is the rational attempt to reduce or void the unpleasant consequences or injuries. It is the evaluation and mitigation of, and response planning for possible threats and risks. Each location and each department within an institution has a different level of threat or risk. Therefore, when thinking about the security of the collection and safety of library users and staff, one must consider how each department/unit can prevent risk and respond to its attendant problems, then integrate the needs of each department into the whole picture (Kahn, 2008).

Generally, risk analysis involves the identification of risk, risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication. There are a number of distinct approaches to risk analysis. These habitually break down into two types: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative risk analysis, also called probabilistic analysis, is one of several tools that may be chosen by the decision maker when assessing risk. It employs two fundamental elements: the probability of an event occurring and the likely loss should it occur. It makes use of a single figure produced from these elements. This is calculated for an event by simply multiplying the



potential loss by the probability. It is thus possible to rank events in order of risk and to make decisions based upon this (Teygeler, 2004).

The literature of security and safety in libraries can be divided largely into incident prevention and emergency preparedness/response. These two approaches seek to reduce the two components of risk respectively: prevention seeks to reduce the frequency of incidents, while emergency preparedness/response is an effort to reduce the negative impact of incidents. The focus is on preventive procedures and planning for a wide variety of incidents. This study seeks to investigate the disaster prevention mechanism in academic libraries in Oyo state with a view to obtaining data to present a model for risk assessment, prioritization of efforts, and determination of the most appropriate kinds of prevention and preparation.

A data-driven approach to risk assessment is only as good as the data itself. There is no consistent, longitudinal data collection or reporting for security and safety incidents in libraries. While there have been occasional surveys of libraries concerning their emergency procedures, these are also not collected consistently. The data problem in assessing risk has been discussed by Lincoln (1984). According to Lincoln (1984:179), "One of the major problems in assessing crime and disruption in public and other libraries has been the lack of a systematic series of studies of these patterns on a national level". Lincoln's three-year study showed consistently higher crime and incident levels in urban libraries, but the focus of the data was on public libraries.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Risk management involves establishing an appropriate risk management infrastructure and culture, and applying logical and systematic risk management processes to all stages in the life cycle of any activity, function or operation. By minimizing losses and maximizing gains, risk management enables the university to best meet its organizational objectives.

The key issue for any organization/academic library is to identify and measure its exposures and opportunities and manage them to the benefit of all stakeholders. An essential element of the risk management process



is to ensure that the identified risks and their control processes are closely monitored through the adoption of effective risk management tools and techniques. Some of the benefits of risk management include: creating best practices, quality focused and risk-aware organization, effective utilization of resources including human resources (Haimes, 2004). Human beings have been identified as instrumental elements in causing risks as well as mitigating them (Erven, 2008), thus, the need to effectively utilize their services for optimum output and efficiency while keeping disasters and preventable risks as low as possible.

According to Raffensperger (2010) the literature of security and safety in libraries can be divided largely into incident prevention and emergency preparedness/response. These two approaches seek to reduce the two components of risk respectively: prevention seeks to reduce the frequency of incidents, while emergency preparedness/response is an effort to reduce the negative impact of incidents.

Risk Management consists of the following two broad categories of activities: risk assessment and risk control. Under risk assessment, risk identification, risk analysis, and risk prioritization is done. In risk assessment, the analyst often attempts to answer the following set of triplet questions (Haimes, 2004):

What can go wrong?

What is the likelihood that it would go wrong?

What are the consequences?

The same questions can be asked within the academic library. Some of the human resources' risks could arise as a result of death, disability (temporary or permanent), divorce, management error/incompetence, unexpected temporary leave, poor employee management practices as well as employee turnover (Marshall & Alexander, 2009).

According to Haimes (2004), trust is crucial too in risk management. In the current climate of financial instabilities, dynamic changes in psychological contracts, corporate greed, all have the potential to destroy trust.



Haimes (2004) opined that risk management builds on the risk assessment process by seeking answers to a second set of three questions. An essential element of the risk management process is to ensure that the identified risks and their control processes are closely monitored through the adoption of effective risk management tools and techniques.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of this study is to evaluate data to present a model for risk assessment, prioritization of efforts, and determination of the appropriate kinds of prevention and preparation of disasters in academic libraries. The study also seeks to:

To determine the existence or otherwise of a risk management policy in the selected academic libraries

To find out the types of risk factors as perceived by respondents and risk management techniques in the selected libraries

To identify in general the aspects of library facilities which are more vulnerable to risk and ways to reduce the risk

Identify the risk prevention/management mechanism available in academic libraries

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

Are there risk management policies in the surveyed academic libraries?

What is the level of preparation aimed at reducing risk in the surveyed academic libraries?

Which library facilities are vulnerable to risk?

What are the risk prevention/management mechanisms available in surveyed academic libraries?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Four university libraries in Oyo State, Nigeria were selected and used in

the study. The four university Libraries used for the study are:

Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Library (LAUTECHLIB)  
Ogbomoso

Kenneth Dike Library (KDL) University of Ibadan, Ibadan

Lead City University Library (LCUL), Ibadan

Ajayi Crowther University Library (ACULIB) Oyo

The survey technique was employed in the study with a self developed questionnaire to collect data on risk management strategies in the surveyed university libraries. The respondents comprised library staff which include librarians, library officers, and other non professional staff. The questionnaire sought to obtain data on risk management and disaster prevention measure in the libraries. The distribution was done personally by the researchers which enabled them to clarify certain issues of ambiguity with the respondents. A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed but only sixty (60) were completed and returned, making a 75 percent response rate.

## RESULTS

### Demographics

There were more female respondents (33) as shown in Table 1 than the males (27). More responses were obtained from KDL (42 percent), followed by LAUTECHLIB, LCULIB, and ACULIB.

Table 1 Response rate by gender and institutions

| University library | Female | Male | Total | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|--------|------|-------|----------------|
| KDL                | 14     | 11   | 25    | 42             |
| LAUTECHLIB         | 9      | 6    | 15    | 25             |
| LCULIB             | 6      | 8    | 14    | 23             |
| ACULIB             | 4      | 2    | 6     | 10             |
| TOTAL              | 33     | 27   | 60    | 100            |

### The Existence of a risk assessment policy

The nature of the risk management policy adopted by the surveyed university libraries is indicated in Table 2. It showed that 88% of the



respondents revealed that there is a written collection security policy used for collection security management. The policies may deal with eating, drinking, and improper use of collection, furniture, and equipment, as well as misuse of computer and other library facilities.

Table 2 Risk management policies

| Nature of the policy           | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | I don't know (%) |
|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| Written risk assessment policy | 53 (88)   | 4 (7)        | 3 (5)            |
| No written policy              | 6 (10)    | 17 (28)      | 12 (20)          |
| No security policy at all      | 1 (2)     | 24 (40)      | 10 (16)          |

A written risk management policy is a clear indication of management support for efforts to properly protect the collection. Research by (Brown 2007) has indicated the need for a written or documented policy. A collection security policy, according to Kara (2009) is a pre-requisite for handling collection security problems effectively and its practices should be supported with sound implementation. Such policies are very important in the governance or management of collection security issues in libraries. Kara (2009) further stresses the need for evaluation of the policy and that library staff or committee member could become involved in formulating the policy or evaluating its usefulness.

### Types of risks involved in libraries

Respondents were asked to indicate the types of risks they know of. There is agreement on the types of risks that frequently occur in academic libraries (Table 3). Fire outbreak and theft of library materials are the main risks in the surveyed university libraries. This is indicated by 54 (90%) respondents in the survey. This is closely followed by building collapse and book mutilation as indicated by 49 (82%) respondents respectively. Other risk issues are students' unrest; cultism; tearing and yellowing of books; and insects or worms attacks on books.

**Table 3 Types of risk**

| S/N | Security breaches or issues in the libraries | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | I don't know (%) |
|-----|--|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| 1   | Fire outbreak                                | 54 (90)   | 2 (3)        | 4 (7)            |
| 2   | Theft and burglary                           | 54 (90)   | 6 (10)       | -                |
| 3   | Building collapse                            | 49 (82)   | 11 (18)      | -                |
| 4   | Flood  | 49 (82)   | 10 (16)      | 1 (2)            |
| 5   | Students' unrest                             | 46 (77)   | 12 (20)      | 2 (3)            |
| 6   | Cultism                                      | 46 (77)   | 7 (12)       | 7 (12)           |
| 7   | Staff protest                                | 45 (75)   | 8 (13)       | 7 (12)           |
| 8   | Electronic information crash                 | 45 (75)   | 13 (22)      | 2 (3)            |
| 9   | Books attacked by insects or worms           | 42 (70)   | 17 (28)      | 1 (2)            |
| 10  | Mutilation                                   | 41 (68)   | 13 (22)      | 6 (10)           |
| 11  | Others                                       | 40 (67)   | 12 (20)      | 8 (13)           |

The findings of this study confirmed the literature on risks involved in academic libraries. Haimes (2004) and Erven (2008) opined that human beings have been identified as instrumental elements in causing risks as well as mitigating them and stressed the need to effectively utilize their services for optimum output and efficiency while keeping disasters and preventable risks as low as possible.

#### **Library facilities which are vulnerable to risks**

Print materials are more vulnerable to security breaches, indicated by 52 (87%) respondents.



| S/N | Type of facilities  | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) |
|-----|---------------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1   | Library collections | 52 (87)   | 8 (13)       |
| 2   | Buildings           | 44 (73)   | 16 (27)      |
| 3   | Computer systems    | 44 (73)   | 16 (27)      |
| 4   | Library personnel   | 43 (72)   | 17 (28)      |

The respondents indicated that library collections 52 (87%) in the form of print materials are the most vulnerable to security breaches. This is because they are more prone to mutilation, theft, defacing, fire, insect attack and so on.

### Reducing risk

Table 5 Measures used to reduce and address risk in libraries

| S/N | Security measures used to reduce breaches                                  | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | I don't know (%) |
|-----|--|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| 1   | Electronic security system such as use of alarm and surveillance cameras   | 55 (92)   | 5 (8)        | Nil              |
| 2   | Manual security approach such as: monitoring users at the circulation desk | 52 (87)   | 8 (13)       | Nil              |
| 3   | The use of security guards   | 46 (77)   | 14 (23)      | Nil              |
| 4   | Checking users ID card before they are allowed access to the library.      | 50 (83)   | 10 (17)      | Nil              |

Table 5 above indicates the measures used to reduce and address security breaches. The respondents in the study indicated that their libraries use a combination of measures. The majority 55 (92%) believe that electronic security systems such as alarms, surveillance cameras, etc., can help address security breaches. The libraries use approaches such as monitoring users at the circulation desk, checking identity cards, allowing

access, and using security guards 46 (77 %). The application of information and communication technology in libraries would reduce risk as prompt information and prevention measure would have been taken.

### **Challenges to risk management**

Respondents used the open-ended section of the questionnaire to identify challenges to risk management. Some identified system failure or downtime and lack of technical support as the main challenges. Other challenges identified include the lack of awareness of the cost implication or effect of security breaches by users of the library.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Risk, while connoting serious consequences, library administrator must work knowledgeably to manage the risks identified. They must continue to communicate with their constituents about their needs, but these conversations should be expanded in scope, on changing expectations as well as convey information about changes in scholarly communication, the information marketplace and risks to professional and societal values. While this is an essential part of planning, there is also a need for a broader and more structured approach to risk and what resources libraries dedicate to prevention and preparation.

As a result of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Risk management should be incorporated into the strategic and operational planning processes at all levels of academic libraries within the parent institutions.

Risk assessments should be conducted on all new equipment and facilities, ventures and projects prior to commencement to ensure alignment with risk appetite.

Risks should be identified, reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis at nominated levels within library system.

All identified risks should be recorded in the library's risk management system and assigned an owner who is responsible for managing, monitoring and ensuring that adequate controls and treatments are being applied so that risks are brought within tolerable levels.



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