

Session 8: Disaster Planning and Recovery

Moderator: Kris Anderson

TYPHOON YOLANDA: ITS IMPACTS TO THE LIBRARIES IN NORTHERN PANAY, WESTERN VISAYAS, PHILIPPINES

Daryl L. Superio^{1,2*} and Stephen B. Alayon^{1,2,3}

1. Aquaculture Department, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, Tigbauan, Iloilo 5021 Philippines
 2. College of Education, Central Philippine University, Jaro, Iloilo City, 5000 Philippines
 3. College of Education, University of San Agustin, Iloilo City, 5000 Philippines
- Corresponding author. E-mail: dlsuperio@seafdec.org.ph

Abstract:

The paper documents the impacts of typhoon Yolanda to the academic libraries in Northern Panay, Western Visayas, Philippines. It also discusses the level of knowledge of the library staff on disaster management and their disaster preparedness and recovery efforts. The factors that contributed to the extent of damage to libraries and their collections and the lessons which the librarians have learned in the disaster were also discussed.

Keywords: Academic libraries, conservation and restoration, emergency management, library materials, Philippines, typhoon Yolanda, typhoons.

Introduction

The Philippines, one of the top three global disaster risk hotspots (Mucke, 2012), is experiencing an average of 19 to 20 typhoons annually (De Vera, 2013). However, in 2013 25 entered the country, surpassing the annual average. Of the 25 typhoons, 11 made landfall, and of these, seven hit Visayas or Mindanao area, one of which was typhoon Yolanda (international name Haiyan), dubbed as the strongest typhoon in the Philippine history. On November 8, 2013, typhoon Yolanda made six landfalls in the islands of Samar, Leyte, Cebu (Daanbantayan and Bantayan), Northern Iloilo and Palawan respectively (NDRRMC, 2014). Thousands of people perished and billions of pesos worth of agriculture and infrastructures were damaged. Other than houses, health facilities and roads or bridges, hundreds of schools as well as their libraries were greatly affected.

The Philippine Climate Change Commission (PCC) acknowledged that the typhoon belt of the Philippines has shifted to Visayas region from northern Luzon (Fernandez, 2014). Filipinos must always be prepared for the worst, not just to save lives and properties but also to preserve societal treasures for the use of future generations. Libraries, as the depositories of knowledge and information, must safeguard their collections by any possible means. However, when typhoon Yolanda hit, the majority of the collections of the libraries in the affected areas were greatly damaged due to unsecured library structure or storm surge, a reality that reflects the current state of most libraries in the country.

To assess the impact of typhoon Yolanda to the libraries in Northern Panay, Western Visayas, Philippines a survey was conducted to twenty-two academic libraries, nine from Northern Iloilo, seven from Capiz and six from Aklan. Figure 1 shows the location of the respondents, and the extent of damage is indicated by different color gradients.

The study aims to identify the level of knowledge of the library staff on disaster management; the disaster preparedness and recovery efforts of the library staff; the factors that contributed to the extent of damage to libraries and their collections; and the lessons learned by the librarians in the disaster.

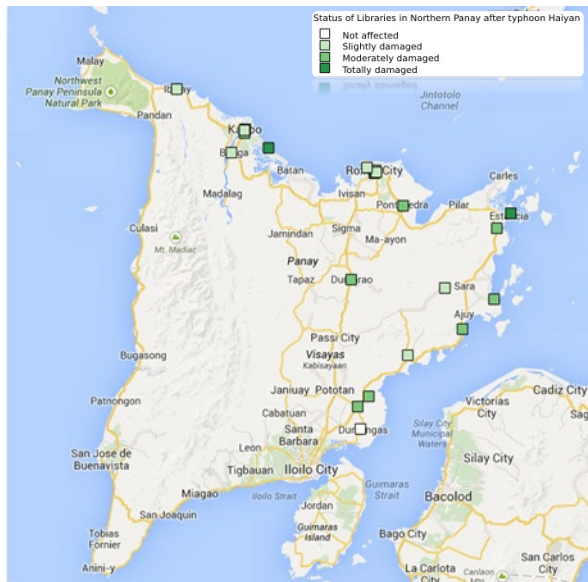


Figure 1. Map of the Panay Islands. The square marks in different color gradients indicating the location of the respondents, and the severity of the damage caused by typhoon Yolanda. Map generated thru Google Earth.

Methodology: Data Collection

Using an eight-part survey instrument, head librarians, officers-in-charge or senior staff of 22 libraries were identified, surveyed and interviewed in April 2014. The survey instrument contained questions about demographic characteristics; information on the library and its environment; disaster management and preparedness; impacts of typhoon Yolanda; post-typhoon responses; recovery efforts; and lessons learned.

Prior to the survey interview, the respondents were contacted through e-mail, Facebook or text message. The instrument was e-mailed to some respondents to save time during the data gathering. Facebook, text messaging and telephone calls were also used to follow-up some of the respondents whose answers needed further clarifications. Visual inspections of the damaged library buildings and affected library collections were also conducted.

Results and Discussions

The Libraries and Their Personnel

Of the 22 libraries, 77% are government funded universities and colleges, while the remaining 23% are privately owned; of the 22 libraries 27% offer fisheries courses. It is worth noting that despite the active effort of the Philippine Board for Librarians (BFL) and the Philippine Librarians Association Inc. (PLAI) on the professionalization of Philippine librarianship, 23% of the surveyed libraries were manned by a non-licensed/paraprofessional staff. Only 27% of them were manned by a librarian with Masters degree in Library and Information Science.

Training the staff on disaster management plays a significant role in libraries, as staff will enable the implementation of the disaster management plan (Kaur, 2009). However, in the case of the respondents to the study only 50% of the libraries have at least one staff twho has undergone training and/or attended seminar/s on disaster management. The majority of library personnel lack awareness regarding disaster management, and this is the main reason for the failure of the implementation of a disaster management plan (Lyall, 1996). Generally, library staff lack training not because they don't want the additional responsibility, but rather because they lack support from their administrators. Unsupportive management was very common among the libraries because of the lack of financial resources (Kastagiolas, 2011) and because the library is the lowest priority.

The Libraries and Disaster Management

According to Khan (2012), disaster response plans “will enable the disaster response team to implement response and recovery procedures as quickly as possible based upon well-thought-out priorities and techniques.” Libraries are the storehouse of knowledge, and being prone to hazards or disasters such as fire, water, vermin and molds etc., must implement one. However, only 18% (4 of 22) of the respondents have a written disaster management plan. Most of the reasons for the non-existence of a disaster management plan other than lack of training were lack of human and financial resources for the implementation of the plan, while some said that there is no perceived risk (Table 1).

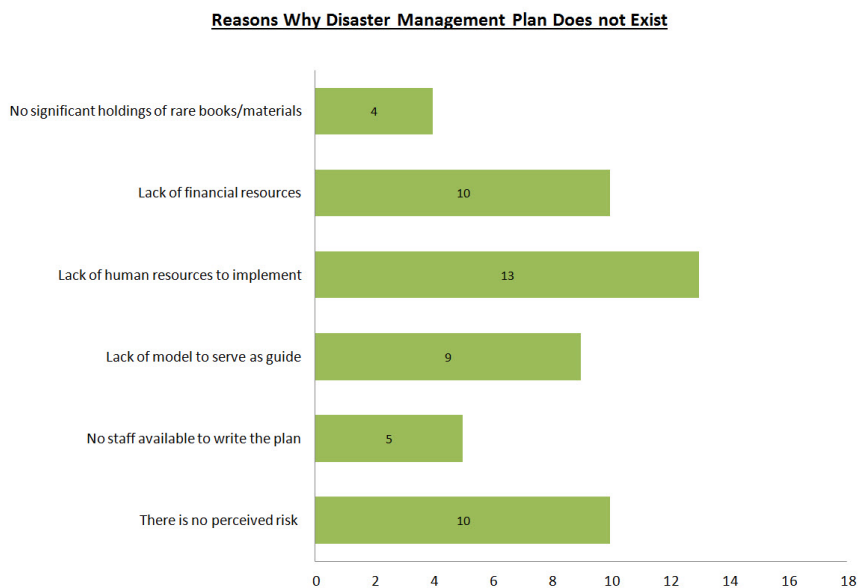


Table 1. Common reasons for the non-existence of a disaster management plan among 18 libraries.

Although the majority of the libraries do not have disaster management plans, all of them have disaster management practices. Most common are organized drills and exercises in case of disaster, an updated

telephone tree and labeling of the collection indicating priorities to be salvaged in case of disaster (Figure 2).

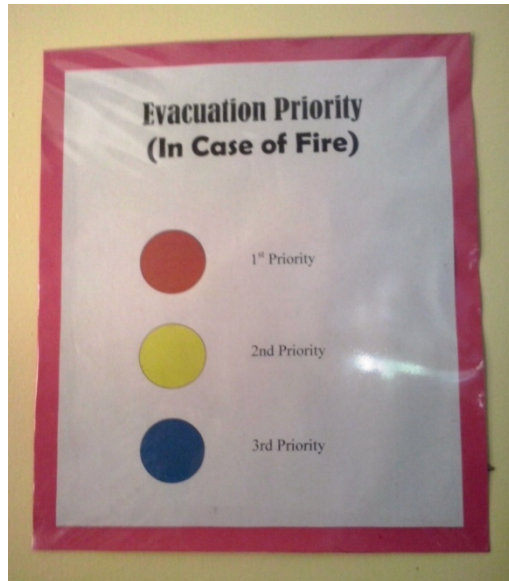


Figure 2. A label indicating evacuation priority in case of disaster, a common practice among the libraries. Photo by D.L. Superio.

Typhoon Yolanda and the Libraries

A strong physical structure is always an advantage - 59% of the libraries are built of concrete materials, while the remaining 41% are made of a mixture of concrete and wood. The majority are in the capital city, 100 meters or more away from the shoreline. There are two libraries that are 25 meters or less nearer to the shoreline, and these two libraries were greatly affected by the typhoon, sustaining severe damage primarily because of storm surge.

Fourteen percent of the respondents declared that their library buildings were totally damaged; almost all of the fixtures were detached or flown, e.g. roofs, windows, etc., which caused water leakage to the library and damaged most of their collection. Thirty-six percent had moderate damage, 45% were slightly damaged, and luckily one was spared.

Three of the libraries suffered almost 70% damage in their collections; 32% declared 20-50%; 36% declared below 20%, and 18% declared that their library collections were not affected. Broken or detached windows, doors and walls that caused water to enter the library were the major cause of the damage. To save the damaged collections, the most common practices were removal or draining of standing water in the library, air-drying of the affected collections inside the library building, opening of the books and positioning them vertically. To hasten the drying process 61% opted to sun-dry some of their collections, which unfortunately caused some books to crumple, and those made from glossy papers stuck together, aggravating the damage to the point that some could no longer be saved. Fifty six percent were able to save at least 50% of their damaged collections while the rest could only save less than 50%.

Fifty-six of the libraries followed guidelines/standards in the disposal of their damaged collections. Those standards are prescribed in the Library Manual and by the Philippine Commission on Audit for

Government funded libraries. The major reasons for the disposal of the library materials were infestation by molds, along with those with glossy/coated pages that stuck together and some color illustrations that bled. Samples of the damaged materials are shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Damaged library materials (a) infested with molds, (b) with glossy/coated pages that stuck together, (c) craggy and brittle due to sun-drying, and (d) salvaged collections that were returned back to shelves. Photos by DJ Alian (a, c) and DL Superio (b, d.)

Respondents identified the factors that enabled fast recovery from the disaster. A committed library staff topped the list, while lack of support from the management was the major impediment to the recovery of the other libraries. It was observed that some of the libraries were not yet renovated, with the damaged library collections stored outside the library building in the nearby stockrooms, some in sack bags or in empty boxes, some stacked in some areas outside the library. To enable the libraries to provide for the needs of their patrons, some of damaged collections were returned back to the shelves (Figure 3, item d).

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Although a disaster may be statistically unlikely to happen, that still does not mean that it will not happen (Cuthbert & Doig, 1994), and therefore libraries and their personnel must always be ready. Having a working disaster management plan is always an advantage as it will guide the library personnel on what to do in preparation for a disaster and afterwards. Hence, library personnel must be educated and trained regularly to safeguard the library collections, therefore ensuring the continuity of services. But this is not the case in the Philippines, in spite of their vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters, since the majority of libraries do not have disaster management plans and are manned by library personnel who do not have enough knowledge and training on disaster management and recovery - resulting in their inability to save huge fractions of their affected library collections.

Despite of the fact that these librarians lack knowledge, they have shown great efforts in the recovery of their libraries and resources. Their lack of knowledge and the scarcity of resources did not limit them in performing their tasks. However, committed library personnel are not always enough without the support of management. Therefore librarians and management must work together to ensure the safety of their libraries and resources and for the provision of quality services to their patrons, not just on or after the disaster but for all of their operations.

References

- Cuthbert, S., & Doig, J. (1994). Disaster plans: Who needs them? *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 25(1), 13–18.
- De Vera, E. (2013, November 07). 20 cyclones visit PH annually. *Manila Bulletin*. Retrieved from <http://www.mb.com.ph/20-cyclones-visit-ph-annually/>.
- Fernandez, R. (2014, January 12). Visayas now Phl's typhoon belt. *The Philippine Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/01/12/1277812/visayas-now-phls-typhoon-belt>.
- Kahn, M. B. (2012). *Disaster response and planning for libraries* (3rd ed.). Chicago: American Library Association.
- Kaur, T. (2009). Disaster planning in university libraries in India: A neglected area. *New Library World*, 110(3/4), 175–187.
- Kostagiolas, P., Araka, I., Theodorou, R. & Bokos, G. (2011). Disaster management approaches for academic libraries: An issue not to be neglected in Greece. *Library Management*, 32(8/9), 516–530.
- Mucke, P. (2012). Disaster risk, environmental degradation and global sustainability policy. In N. Brodbeck (Ed.), *WorldRiskReport 2012*, 5-9. Germany: Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft.
- Philippines, NDRMMC. (2014). *SitRep no. 108. Effects of typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan)*. Retrieved 12 December 2014 from <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/NDRMMC%20Update%20-%20Sitrep%20No%20108%20re%20TY%20Yolanda%20-%2003%20April%202014.pdf>.