5.8 Good Housekeeping

It is important to ensure a high level of good housekeeping. The building in which library materials are stored should be kept clean and in good condition (Thomas, 1987). But adequate maintenance procedures constitute a big problem and have plagued tropical countries for a long time (Egbor, 1985). Internal housekeeping measures should always be of a high standard. Obviously, food and drink should never be taken into storage areas. Proper receptacles should be provided in canteen and restaurant amenities, which should be cleaned regularly. Foodstuffs should never be left overnight, uncovered or in unsealed containers (Ling, 1998; Rhys-Lewis, 1999). When lending books personal hygiene and housekeeping at the users' home, are also important factors to keep in mind (Ezennia et al., 1995). Good housekeeping is well illustrated by the Dr. Albert Schweizer Museum in Gabon. Compared to the other buildings on the premises, which were cleaned less often, Schweizer's quarters were surprisingly well preserved (Rosenberg, 1986).

Building maintenance can also be considered as part of good housekeeping. The archive will be there for a long time protecting records and providing a working environment for staff and visitors. In recent years there has been an emerging trend in western countries to outsource maintenance activities, outdoors as well as indoors. Many standards have been developed to maintain buildings, equipment and services. It is often thought that maintenance begins following the completion and handover of the facility, but in truth it starts well before that. It begins as part of the building's overall design, which should include the requirement that it is constructed from low maintenance materials (Ling, 1998). The suitability of the sustainable materials and constructions for maintenance should be considered especially carefully.

In tropical settings, the power supply can sometimes be erratic and surges or spikes are not uncommon. Similarly, violent electrical storms can wreak havoc to equipment such as computers. To compensate for the effects of a complete power failure, including a shutdown to the air-conditioning system or PC-network, a reserve power supply may need to be considered in the form of an auxiliary generator. Protection against power surges can be accommodated by means of an UPS e.g. an Uninterrupted Power Supply unit (Ling, 1998). It is still true, however that the major threats to records come from human beings. Records can be damaged by mishandling, carelessness, or by deliberate criminal activities, including theft and vandalism (Thomas, 1987); (see also section on Disaster Preparedness – Manmade Disasters). For further reading see Christensen, 1989.