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Preservation of collections in selected public libraries in Ahmedabad City – A study

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ABSTRACT

In this era the world has gained efforts to preserve resources on heritage. Libraries, museums and archives are the store house of these heritages. These heritage collections can be preserved and widely recognized as an essential element for every library and is accessible to its users. Unfortunately in India, old and prominent public libraries are not serious about the preservation of the heritage collections So this pathetic situation continues for long, the present and future generations may lose for ever our rich and valuable documentary collections and thus country's culture and civilization should be lost. So these rich and glorious documentary heritage needs to be properly surveyed, preserved and conserved to the present generation to future generations. This paper is tried to focus the scenario of the preservation of the heritage collections, methods, and equipment/procedure used in preserving library resources, preventive preservation procedure, and barriers in the preservation of the heritage collections in selected public libraries in Ahmedabad City.

Keywords : Heritage collection, Public Library, Preservation

Introduction:

In this era the world has gained efforts to preserve resources on heritage. Libraries, museums and archives are the store house of these heritages. These heritage collections can be preserved and widely recognized as an essential element for every library and is accessible to its users. The Preservation of the heritage is historical as well as cultural and also an economical process. Heritage is base on the aspects of our past that we cherish that want to keep and pass on to the future generation and the outside world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced 'the convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage'. Now-a-days many International and national organizations and libraries like UNESCO, National Library of Australia, Library of Congress, IFLA, UGC, National Knowledge Commission, etc. have emphasized the need for digital preservation of the heritage documents. It is worth to not that National Digital Preservation Programme (NDPP) is a good beginning to have a National Digital Preservation policy for India.

Heritage is an expression of the ways in which the society developed and is passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. Heritage is often expressed as either intangible or tangible heritage which is passed on from one generation to another through libraries. These heritage collections are spread all over the country and in some cases abroad as well. Today most of them face survival threats.

Nature of heritage collections:

Heritage collection is explained in UNESCO documents as “our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to our future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage is both irreplaceable sources of life and as inspiration.”^[1] In the present context, this definition is considered to mean the term “heritage collection” are literary, artifacts, historical works, scientific research, manuscripts, palm leaves and such other materials old edition books not available in the market, unique documents such as official documents, government reports, music records, etc. They are in the form of manuscripts, books, periodicals, reports, cassettes, floppies, CDs, DCDs, online materials etc. These collections may be in the form of

- Non paper medium
- Paper medium
- Magnetic medium
- On-line medium

What is Preservation?

Preservation is the oldest and the most fundamental function of libraries and archives. In simple terms ‘Preservation’ is the activity of protecting something from loss or danger. Preservation can be done for the betterment and also for improvement, advancement, change and progress in development. It involves controlling the environment and conditions of use. It may include treatment in order to maintain an object, as nearly as possible, in an unchanging state. In case of archival material, moving image and sound, this may involve transfer to another medium.

Preservation “refers to the set of activities that aims to prolong the life of a record and relevant metadata, enhance its value, or improve access to it through non-interventive means. This includes actions taken to influence records creators prior to selection and acquisition”.^[2] It should be distinguished from conservation. Sometime conservation is used interchangeably with preservation.

Why preserve heritage collection?

Libraries possess rich, varied, rare and valuable collections reflecting the social, economic, political, cultural, historical, traditional and religious aspects of the country and the wealth of Indian languages and its people. These libraries regarded as social and cultural institutions of the nation and reflect the documentary heritage of our country and world’s heritage in general. Our country’s culture and civilization depend on them. But in India, old and prominent public libraries are not serious about the

preservation of heritage collection and not able to initiate proper action in this regard for want of a proper support from the government (state and national) and other funding agencies. So this pathetic situation continues for long, the present and future generations may lose for ever our rich and valuable documentary collections and thus country's culture and civilization should be lost. So these rich and glorious documentary heritage needs to be properly surveyed, preserved and conserved from the present generation to the future generations.

More over it is cost effective and promotes green culture for libraries. It is useful for increasing the visibility of the library and helps to attract users

Preservation Considerations:

Most of the heritage resources in our libraries are made of materials. They are deteriorating themselves due to the natural reasons; some of them are as;

- Environmental Factors (light, temperature, moisture, air pollution, etc.)
- Acidity of Paper
- Pests & insects
- Disasters
- Physical conditions (leaking roofs, broken windows, etc.)
- Human factors
- Unstable storage media
- Technological obsolescence
- Virus, hacking and wear and tear

What should be preserved?

Not all the documents/collections are needed to be preserved or can be preserved. In the preservation process selection of materials is an important aspect. In the case of the public library selection is more of a complex issue, because it consists of all shades and levels of knowledge. There are four major aspects to consider for heritage preservation. These are

- Historical significances
- Social significances
- Aesthetic significances
- Scientific significances

Here we need a structured policies and guidelines. Unfortunately in India there are no sound discussions and studies to formulate polices regarding these aspects. Any way public libraries have their own missions and objectives.

According to IFLA/UNESCO public library Manifesto, 1994. "Public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups". It is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. So they are the key agency in the local community for collection, preservation and promotion of local culture. They should consider the resources regarding:

- Local history collections
- Manuscripts
- Images, Photographs
- Sound recordings, Videos
- Pamphlets
- Sculpture

How to preserve and make access?

Careful studies and experience are required for preservation of collection. The following points are to be considered while preserving and digitizing.

- Which method/technique to be used?
- What equipment and software are to be used?
- What standards are to be followed?
- What is the life expectancy of storage media and access media?

As the storage media and access software can become obsolete with time, advancement in storage and communication technology and decisions regarding the longevity and capacity of the medium are to be taken care of.

Preservation Techniques/Procedures used for library resources:

- Binding of loose sheets
- Microfilming
- Photocopying
- Deacidification
- Digitisation

Changes in the preservation techniques:

Major reasons regarding changes in the preservation techniques are

- Libraries are changing
- Information that they access is changing
- Demand of users is changing

So the existing preservation methods are not compactable with the latest resources available in libraries. Now-a-days digitization is more effective and popular for preservation of heritage collection of libraries.

Objectives of the study:

The specific objectives of the study are as under.

- To know the present scenario of preservation of heritage resources of libraries.
- To identify the type of collection that is being digitized in libraries.
- To know the various methods/techniques used for preservation of heritage resources of libraries.
- To examine the traditional and modern methods for preservation of heritage collection of libraries.
- To ascertain the availability of infrastructure for the preservation of heritage collection of libraries.
- To understand the challenges faced by the librarian for preservation of heritage collection.
- To ascertain details about the future plans of the libraries in preservation of heritage collection.

Scope and Limitation:

Two rich public libraries of Ahmedabad city are selected for the present study. These libraries are

- Maneklal Jathalal Library (1938)
- Gujarat Vidhyapith Library (1920)

Research Methodology:

The methodology of the study comprises of tool, sample and research method. Let the look at the details of each. The survey method of descriptive type of research has been employed of the present study.

Tools

A structure questionnaire having two section one for primary information and second for preservation of heritage collection in a library. The second section includes 12 statements regarding the preservation of heritage collection.

Sample of the study

The selected sampling technique has been employed for the present study. The sample comprises 2 rich public libraries of Ahmedabad city.

Research Method

The survey method of descriptive type of research has been employed of the present study.

Data Collection, analysis, &interpretation

Data is collected from two rich public libraries of Ahmedabad city. These libraries are

Maneklal Jathalal Library (1938)

Gujarat Vidhyapith Library (1920)

General information about two libraries:

| Library | M.J.L. | G.V.L. |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Librarian | Permanent | Adhoc |
| Experience of librarian | 10 Year | 40 Year |
| Professional Staff | 37 | 16 + 7 |
| Non professional Staff | 49 | 12 |
| Library building | Good heritage | Good heritage |

General information about collections:

| Library | M.J.L. | G.V.L. |
|--|---|--|
| Total No of Books | 744826 | 554420 |
| Periodicals/Journals | 265 | 350 |
| News paper | 10 – 50 | 10 – 50 |
| Manuscripts | | 691 (550 Digitize) |
| Sheet materials (Maps, Posters, photographs, Drawings, Paintings) | 50 – 100 Maps 70 – 80 photographs | 162 Photographs |
| Electronics media (Video, Tape, Floppy, Discs, CDs, DVDs, Cassettes) | 2500 | 1200 CDs- DVDs 269 video Cassettes 181 Taped Cassettes 1911 Slides |
| Music Records | | |
| Microforms (microfilm, microfiche) | | 185 Micro Films, 25 Micro Fisches), 39 Film , |
| Others | | 330 Ph.D. Thesis 1037 MPhil Deser. 1227 Master Pro. Few books in Braille lipi |

Information about Policies & budget for preservation of library resources:

| Policies & budget | M.J.L. | G.V.L. |
|--|--|---|
| Does your library have any policies or procedures for identifying heritage collection? | Yes | Yes |
| Separate budget can be allocated for preservation of library resources? | Yes Only for binding of books & periodicals /journals | Yes Only for binding of books & periodicals /journals & News paper |
| How much amount allocated? | 1 lack | 2lack |
| Your library have an any grant from the state government / national government /other (Specify) | | |

Both the libraries have their own policies and procedure for identifying heritage collection and preservation. There are separate budget can be allocated only for binding of books and periodicals /journals and news papers. No special budget can be allocated for preservation of heritage collection. Both libraries have not received any grant from the state government / national government /other institutions.

Methods used in preserving library resources:

Regular –R Irregular-Ir Occasionally- O Never-N

| Preservation Method | M.J.L. | | | | G.V.L. | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|----|---|---|--------|-----|---|---|
| | R | IR | O | N | R | IR | O | N |
| Binding of Books | | | | | | | | |
| Periodicals/Journals | Yes | | | | | Yes | | |
| Newspaper Others | Yes | | | | | Yes | | |
| Microfilming | | | | | | | | |
| Photocopying | | | | | | | | |
| Deacidification | | | | | | | | |
| Digitization | introduce | | | | | Yes | | |

Both libraries have asked a question regarding methods used in preserving library resources; M.J. library are used bindery method for books and journals/periodicals regularly, where as G.V. library

used bindery method for books, journals/periodicals and newspaper regularly. Moreover M.J. library just newly introduce a digital method for preservation. G.V. library used on regular base under government project CDEC does digitization of 45000 books only copyright section. Both the libraries are not used any other preservation methods.

Equipment / procedures used in preserving library resources?

Not available –NA Available in house – AH

Available elsewhere-AE Contract –C

| Equipment/procedure | M.J.L. | | | | G.V.L. | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|----|----|---|--------|----|----|---|
| | NA | AH | AE | C | NA | AH | AE | C |
| Conservation laboratory | | | | | | | | |
| Paper lamination equipment | | | | | | | | |
| Bindery | | | | | | | | |
| Mass Deacidification facilities | | | | * | | | | * |
| Fumigation Chamber | | | | | | | | |
| Micro filmic facilities | | | | | | | | |
| Other please specify | | | | | | | | |

Both libraries have asked a question regarding equipment/procedures used in preserving library resources; both the libraries have no in-house facilities, but both libraries bind the books and periodicals/journals on contract base.

Preventive Preservation Procedures:

Regular –R Irregular-Ir Occasionally- O Never-N

| Preventive Preservation Procedures | M.J.L. | | | | G.V.L. | | | |
|--|--------|----|---|---|--------|----|---|---|
| | R | IR | O | N | R | IR | O | N |
| Book repair | * | | | | * | | | |
| Floor cleaning | * | | | | * | | | |
| Shelf cleaning | * | | | | * | | | |
| Environmental Monitoring | * | | | | * | | | |
| Collection condition surveys | | | | | * | | | |
| Pest inspections | | | | | * | | | |
| Disaster preparedness and response plan | | | * | | | | * | |
| Other please describe | | | | | | | | |

Both libraries have asked a question about preventive preservation procedures; both libraries take care of building, books and other collection with proper cleaning and maintaining regularly. They are also putting naphabolls in stack room and done pest control. Both the libraries take care about disaster preparedness occasionally.

Heritage collections in your library:

| Library Resources | No. of Preservation collection | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| | M.J.L. | G.V.L. |
| Books | 50 - 100 | |
| Periodicals/Journals | | |
| News paper | | Preserved Times of India and Gujarat Samachar From the year1971 |
| Manuscripts | | 691 (550 digitizes) |
| Sheet materials (Maps, Posters, photographs, Drawings, Paintings) | 50 – 100 Maps 70 – 80 photographs | 162 Photographs |
| Electronics media (Video, Tape, Floppy, Discs, CDs, DVDs, Cassettes) | 200 | 1200 CDs- DVDs 269 video Cassettes 181 Taped Cassettes 1911 Slides |
| Music Records | | |
| Microforms (microfilm, microfiche) | | 185 Micro Films, 25 Micro Fische), 39 Film , |
| Others | | 330 Ph.D. Thesis 1037 MPhil Desertation. 1227 Master Pro. Few books in braille lipi |

Both libraries have asked a question about no. of heritage collection in your library; both the libraries have rich heritage resources.

Barriers in preservation of heritage collection:

Strongly Agree –SA Agree –A Disagree- D Strongly Disagree-SG

| Barriers in preservation of heritage collection | M.J.L. | | | | G.V.L. | | | |
|---|--------|---|----|----|--------|---|----|----|
| | S.A. | A | DA | SD | S.A. | A | DA | SD |
| Inadequate Funding | | * | | | | | * | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| Trained manpower | | * | | | | * | | |
| Copyright issues | | | * | | | | * | |
| Insufficient infrastructure | | * | | | | * | | |
| Non-existence of software | | | * | | | | * | |
| Harsh environmental condition | * | | | | | * | | |
| Any other | | | | | | | | |

Findings and suggestions:

We have visited each library and observed it closely. We have interacted with the librarians. We found that both libraries have a very rich heritage building and many types of rich heritage collections which are amenable for preservation. There are no proper preservation policies of heritage collections so it is the need of the hour to initiate such work and we must keep them safe and secure unless the considerable data about ancient societies, their structures, thoughts, actions, their traditional language, beliefs, customs etc. have been irrevocably lost to date, and as time passes becomes obsolete and is forgotten. It is therefore an imperative that measures should be taken at the earliest to save and preserve posterity, our heritage and culture.

Suggestions:

On the basis of the findings we have concluded some suggestions for the improvement of the preservation of heritage collections are as below:

- Libraries should have policies and sufficient infrastructure for preservation of heritage collection.
- The national, state and local government should come forward for preservation of heritage collection and provide a guidelines, adequate fund and human resources for this end.
- Awareness should be created among library professionals and users for the preservation of the heritage collections.
- Training programs/workshops/seminars should be arranged for library professionals regarding the preservation of the heritage collections.
- Library should find out the right information about sources of funding for the preservation of the heritage collections.
- Each library should make a separate and special budget for the preservation of the heritage collections.

- Each library should develop, protect and promote heritage collection among users.
- Librarian should follow the copy right rules for the preservation of the heritage collections.
- Libraries have to opt for national and international collaborative digitization programs for making successful digital preservation.
- Libraries have to create a network for long term preservation, and to have framework for developing long term repositories.
- Libraries should take initiative about resource sharing for the preservation of the heritage collections.
- Government should have a National Policy for this purpose. This national policy should emphasize of this point and create awareness among the librarians. Such policies need to be implemented, and reviewed, from time to time to cater to new challenges and emerging technologies.
- Every librarian should follow that the preservation of heritage collection is our responsibility and a part of duty.
- There is the need to establish “heritage club” where issues of cultural heritage would be discussed as a means of transmission of oral and intangible heritage.

Conclusion:

The preservation is the oldest and most fundamental function of libraries and archives, although due to the inadequate funds, untrained manpower, insufficient infrastructure, harsh environmental condition, lack of proper preservation policies and strategies, the heritage collection are now in poor and fragile physical conditions. India has probably lost a large number of heritage collections already. Among the existing collections, only portions have been surveyed. So, preservation of the heritage collection will be helpful in safeguarding accessibility for the present and the future generations.

More over the existing preservation methods are not compactable with latest resources available in libraries. So in modern age digital preservation is more effective technique used for preservation of heritage collection in libraries.

There is an old adage that “Preservation is better than Cure.” The same is true for the science of preservation. The concept of preservation is now gradually becoming a central issue in modern librarianship and preventive conservation, play a key role in preserving the documentary heritage for posterity. Therefore every library at least preventive conservation should be practiced to keep the document in healthy, good and unstable condition for generation to generation.

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