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# IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVATION OF MATERIALS IN LIBRARIES: A STUDY

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**Abstract:** Library is a repository of great thinkers of past and the present. It is a temple disseminating knowledge to all the people without any discrimination. It is a heritage of mankind and the holy grail of evidence of the development of the mankind. Its preservation is important as it guides the future generations through righteous path. This paper was written after thorough research and study of the importance of preservation and the role played by it through the past century in the libraries. Efforts for the preservation of the books and the historic documents have gained momentum throughout the whole world in the past century. It can be dated back to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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**Introduction:** Preservation is a formal profession in the libraries and the archives dates back from twentieth century. To provide the future generations with the vast knowledge and a remainder of its history, preservation should be done. There are so many libraries that are collecting books and artifacts but few lack the resources required for the preservation of these valuable items.

The philosophy and the practices have roots in many traditions like The scarab or dung beetle(described as a protector to the Ancient Egyptians), Nabu ( Babylonian god of wisdom and writing, and is the patron of the scribes, librarians and archivists), Metaphysical appeal (by Arabic and other eastern societies to protect books and scrolls was a metaphysical appeal to "Kabi:Kaj," the "King of the Cockroaches.").

Human record-keeping arguably dates back to the cave painting boom of the upper Palaeolithic, some 32,000-40,000 years ago. More direct antecedents are the writing systems that developed in the 4th millennium B.C. Written record keeping and information sharing practices, along with oral tradition, sustain and transmit information from one group to another. This level of preservation has been supplemented over the last century with the professional practice of preservation and conservation in the cultural heritage community.

Collections care is the general maintenance and preventive care of a collection as a whole. This can include activities such as security, environmental monitoring, preservation surveys, and more specialized activities such as mass de-acidification.

Conservation is the treatment and repair of individual items to slow decay or restore them to a usable state. Conservation is occasionally used interchangeably with preservation, particularly outside the professional literature.

Digital preservation is the maintenance of digitally stored information. Some means of digital preservation include refreshing, migration, replication and emulation. This should not be confused with digitization, which is a process of creating digital information which must then itself be preserved digitally.

Disaster preparedness (RT: Disaster Plan / Business Continuation / Disaster Recovery / Disaster Mitigation Plan) is the practice of arranging for the necessary resources and planning the best course of

action to prevent or minimize damage to a collection in the event of a disaster of any level of magnitude, whether natural or man-made.

Reformatting is the practice of creating copies of an object in another type of data-storage device. Reformatting processes include microfilming and digitization.

**Importance of preservation:** The whole human survival depends on preservation of data in wide variety of forms without which we are as the same as the animals around us. Human form is considered superior race only because of careful preservation of the data by our ancestors. If our ancestors had not thought of preserving the culture and heritage, we would have had deprived of the knowledge in the form of stories, epics, music etc., mostly in the form of cave paintings, songs, poems, sculptures on temples and other variety of forms. We can consider these as the ancient preservation techniques adopted by our ancestors. Interestingly these forms are being sustained even today after several destructions either religious and social or natural disasters and calamities. This itself is the proof for how important it is to preserve our valuable knowledge, wisdom and heritage that can be passed off safely to the future generations.

At present the technology is increasing day by day and various technical advances made the preservation of collection of various forms of print materials more effective and less destructive in nature thereby this valuable data can be easily accessible to the coming generations.

Libraries play a vital role in the whole process as they are at the core part of transferring and mediating both the historical information and the ongoing research and information between the knowledge seekers and knowledge providers.

Even the electronic media cannot sustain without the word – library though it may not replace the physical libraries as of now, as the Internet itself can be considered as a huge library. Someone has to upload the data or information into it ( Up-loader or Information Provider ) and someone has to seek it ( Down-loader or seeker ). The whole process is governed by the rules of Library Science like indexing, cataloguing etc.,.

It is very apt to say that the present generation is revolving around data and information. The present day Computer courses you hear most often like Data Science, Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning etc., are based on data. They provide a wide aspects of working with data and at the same time handling carefully the data preservation by incorporating several means of providing security to the data which we implement in Libraries like cryptography while digitization. The major limitation of electronic media is that the whole digital information can be easily damaged by several factors like e-viruses, accidental formatting of data disks, damage caused due to electric fluctuations etc.,.

Preserving print materials is a must, despite its own limitations, as this is the only form which sustained the exchange of information throughout the centuries and can be considered as the most reliable form. It could even survived the extremities of damages caused by fire, floods etc., and also by the destruction by foreign invaders. The library at the erstwhile Taxila University at Nalanda in Bihar stands a testimony.

**Preservation Criteria:**

- Oral tradition or oral-culture.
- The transmission of information from one generation to the next without a writing system.
- Antiquarian practices, including scribal practice, burial practice.
- The libraries at Pergamum, Alexandria and other ancient archives.
- Medieval practices, including the scriptorium and relic collection.
- Renaissance and the changing conception of artists and works of art.
- Enlightenment and the Encyclopaedists.

- Romantic movement's imperative to preserve the archives.
- Standard Functions of preservation programs.

**Factors Considered for Preservation:** One has to consider several factors in order to properly preserve a record: 1) the storage environment of the record, 2) the criteria to determine when preservation is necessary, 3) what the standard preservation practices are for that particular institution, 4) research and testing, and 5) if any vendor services will be needed for further preservation and potentially conservation.

The storage environment is an important factor in the process. The lower the temperature of the storage, the better is for collection. The other important environmental factors to keep vigil are relative humidity, pests, pollutants and the light exposure. The Exposure of light has a significant effect on the stored materials. Not only visible light but other lights like UV and IR can do relative damage to the materials. The more they are exposed to these lights, the more extensive the damage.

As rightly observed by Sekler (2001), “tangible cultural heritage has the great advantage over its intangible counter-part, such that with proper care it will remain authentic over centuries. As long as historic monuments remain without falsification and misleading imitations, they will, even in a neglected state, create a sense of continuity that is an essential part of cultural identity”. Libraries, archives, and museums hold disparate collections in a variety of media, presenting a vast body of knowledge accumulated over the institutions’ history, and the mission of these institutions is to make their collections accessible to intended users. Then the question, what are the roles of library and information science professionals in the preservation of cultural heritage becomes relevant here? Lynch (2002) described several roles that Librarians may play in digital libraries as digitizers of unique materials in special collections (a role also played by museums and archives). Librarians are providers of such services as “virtual reference, preservation and indexing, and as managers and facilitators of scholarly communications, through their participation in establishing institutional repositories”.

**Ethical and Copyright Issues:** While reproducing or reformatting or in any other way copying an item’s contents, raises legal copyright issues. Even a library is allowed to make a limited number of copies of an item for preservation purposes.

Ethics also play an important role in the preservation of the material. While providing the necessary treatment to the material, the conservator must do what is best for the object in the question and not yield pressure or state opinion from outside/external sources. They should refer to the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for practice, which states that the conservation professional must “strive to attain the highest possible standards in all aspects of conservation.”

**Conclusion:** Every organization stands on three pillars viz., capital, human and material resources to support its functions. For the library to develop properly they need not only human but also material resources such as infrastructure which will help the library to carry out its operations. For instance, librarians need to be trained on digitization of library materials; for the training to be effective, the necessary facilities for effective learning should be available. Also when the training has been completed, they need these skill enhancing facilities to work with for permanence of the knowledge and skills acquired during the learning process. The effective functioning of the library, adequate fund needed especially to get the best out from the two other factors (human and material resources). Where adequate fund is provided, training of librarians and equipping the library will be effectively achieved and this will enhance the whole process of digitization of library materials. Environmental conditions constitute a lot to the preservation of library resources. Both harsh and humid weather adversely affects library materials. To ensure the preservation of the cultural heritage resources, they should be stored in air conditioned rooms with moderate temperature and electric fans to avoid hotness in the surroundings.

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