

ARCHIVE COLLECTION: A STUDY IN ITS SIGNIFICANCE

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ABSTRACT

The term 'Archive' derives from the Greek word 'Arkons' which means 'a place where official records are housed'. It has been a very old custom to maintain an official record for the use of the later generations in their study of the past nations, traditions, cultures, climates and people. It is through archives that historians study the causes and effects of various wars and battles. They have also used them in their study and research on the traditional values and their loss, impact of science on web. Impact of felw , computer and internet on the present generation. There are various kind of archives, namely, government archives, institutional archives, business archives. And personal archives etc. which are important is their own way. The success and failure of any nation or organisation depends on archival collection. Therefore, it is mendatery of us to maintain archive collection so that it mey be used for the welfare of mankind by the later generation. The study endervoues to study the significance of archive collection at the present their.

INTRODUCTION

Our Knowledge of the past lives, culture, tradition and society sole by depends on history. As a matter of fact, when a present generation has to study the state of a country, its various aspects its strength and weakness, its successes and failures and what not, it has to look up to the archives of the past. That makes archive collection an essential requirement. Archives are documented records that serve as the most authentic evidence for the historians to carry out their study and research. For the historians evidence in the form of documents like, on clay tablets, paechments, engranijs on metal/rock, paper documents, and recently, microforms are the most authentic sources of research material. Their thesis ideas, discussions and conclusions are based on them. Therefore, archive collection becomes a matter of paramount significance the term 'archive' derives from the Greek word 'Arkons' which means a

place where official records are housed'. There are different kinds of archives, namely, government archives, institutional archives, business archives, literacy archives, personal archives etc. even in an age of computer and internet archives are very important and mih continue to he so in the future. The present study aims to study the significance of archives collection.

In the modern times of Internet, mobile phones, laptops and palmtops, the collection of documents related to historical records is not given the same importance as current and recent records, Access to such records is certainly not easy especially in a this world country like India. This is especially so in such areas as history and social science disciplines. While some records related to religious scriptures existis centres of worship, documents related to institutions, individuals, official rules, and early business houses are limited, wherever some activity is seen in this regard, it is

bare minimal. The tradition of maintaining documents for posterity did not get rooted perhaps due to the tradition of oral transmission of knowledge from “Guru” to his disciple. Much of the knowledge generated and transmitted got diluted over a period of time and today we are facing the consequences and repercussions of it. when one carries out a research into the past, be it about an individual, institution or the nation, lack of documented information is experienced time and again. Researches have to depend on material available in archives outside the country . In an editorial in Current Science, Balram writes: “ A clear sign that an historical record is not a matter of grave importance. The careful maintenance of a written record and the building up of archives and repositories of documents is, undoubtedly, a Western practice, oral history is more popular in India, with every story embellished in the retelling. Organizations, which retain every file in dusty and disorganized disarray, usually discard them by the truckload in periodic cleaning operations. There is no resident archivist, who sifts through the piles of paper looking for the bits that may help a future chronicler to piece together an authentic and interesting story. I felt the absence of a written record, files of correspondence and photographs, most acutely when confronted with the self imposed.....

Exceptions to this are the records available as inscriptions on stone and other materials like parchment, palm leaves and metals. However these belong to a much earlier period and records during the 17th to 19th century are scarce. To some extent the National Archives of India fulfils the requirement mainly with regard to official records. So also the archives belonging to a few business houses like the Tates, and Godrej and banks like Reserve Bank of India and State Bank of India. Researchers still have to depend on material available in archives outside the country.

CREATION AND COLLECTION of AN ARCHIVE DEVELOPMENT

Once the importance of archives is realized and a decision taken to start one, following action will have to be taken to make it successful

- Formulate a Policy
- Draw a Plan of action
- Collect the material
- Organise the material collected
- Make the material available to users
- Maintain the collection
- Continue Collecting material

FARMING OF POLICY

A policy is to be Framed regarding the collection of material is to be collected and how it is to be made accessible. It is important to take note of the possible copyright restrictions that might have been imposed either by the donor or any agency under which the archive is set up. Perhaps some documents of sensitive nature may not be made public though available in the archives.

Plan of Action : A plan, both sheet and long term, has to be drawn keeping in mind the available resources and the urgency. An over enthusiastic Plan, however good it may be, will be not effective. It would be better to phase out the programme and carry out each step paying attention to quality and sustainability.

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

Apart from having an allocated budget for the activities of the archives, another important requirement is to have qualified staff (archivist) from the beginning so that the work is carried out in a professional manner. Providing sufficient space to house the documents following the norms set for preserving archival material is of paramount importance. Proper lighting, dust free rooms with temperature and humidity control are some other issues to be taken care of. Comfortable reading space for the users will greatly enhance the usage of

the archives as environment plays an important part in the usage. In the fast changing modes of access to information, one has to keep in mind the possible requirement to use the latest technology available for both preserving and making available the documents to the users.

COLLECTION OF MATERIAL

Based on the type of archives and its policy, decision will have to be taken regarding the type and the extent of material to be collected. This differs from one archive to another depending on the type of the archives and its framework. Generally documents related to the following areas are to be collected.

INFORMATION TO ARCHIVE

Background to Starting : The background information regarding the starting of an organization is most sought after when a historian is researching about any organization. Document related to the reasons for starting an institution/organization information about its founders, their interaction with each other while establishing the organization, agencies connected with the starting of the institution (could be a single body or multiple agencies- government (s), individuals and philanthropists) are all of primary importance.

Founders : Any material related to the founders of an organization will have to be collected from various sources – from the family records, official documents, personal correspondence, contributions to their own field and related fields.

Information on Location : Records related to the choice of the location of an organization its original location, any controversies regarding the location, photographs of the site before starting the institution. drawings of the building plans, construction activities, will all be relevant.

Achievements of individuals/institutionon : Progress and achievements of an organization at

every stage indicate milestones of progress of an organization.

Financial Information : Records related to the finances of an organization will throw light on the stability of an organization at any particular point of time. The funds received from various sources- the founders, individuals, official agencies/government bodies will indicate the interest of various people in starting and development an organization.

TYPES OF RECORDS USEFUL TO ARCHIVE

Reports : Annual reports of institution, Council/Board/reports, reports of the various committees set up at different periods of time for special purposes, audit reports, reports from other organizations from important part of archival collection.

Biographies : Biographical material about the founders of the organization which appear as periodical articles, books and obituary notices will throw light on various factors related to the founding of an organization.

Correspondence : Correspondence between the founders and others connected in establishing the organization forms an important source of history of the organization. There could be different views among the founders in respect of the constitution, functioning, policy to be laid, etc and these could be found in the letters exchanged between concerned people.

Information from Newspaper and Journals : Important events about Institution are covered by newspapers and also written in journals. These sources will give at least some information which is not available in the records of an organization or if the organization does not make it available for whatever reasons. However one should be very careful in drawing conclusion from such secondary sources.

Oral Histories and Recordings : Oral history recordings form a very important part of the collections in any archives. Recordings of the

interviews with the persons who were involved with the founding of the organization or those who were in the organization in the early periods will give much information, which will be tacit knowledge of the persons. Records talks given on radio, convocation address, lectures delivered during any programme will also be useful information to archive.

Photographs, Films : It is important to collect photographs of the founders, site of the institution before and after construction, construction of building (Early and later), notable visitors to the organization, council/Board members and heads of the institution/Departments and outstanding members of the organization. In the present times, with the technological advances, video films of various programmes of an organization are also an important sources of information.

Financial Records : Records related to the initial funding for starting the organization, The contribution from different sources, regular finances received for annual expenditure, budget details should be persevered carefully as these will indicate the growth of an organization.

Collection development is not a one time task but an ongoing activity in an archive. One keeps finding new material related to early period and also material of current interest. Older institutions which do not have an archive have a much more difficult task in building their archives than the newer ones. The new

institution should take advantage of this fact and should start collecting any material of relevance as discussed above without allowing the available sources to get lost for various reasons.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it becomes apparent that the collection of various archives, viz, government archives, institutional archives, business archives and personal archives is very important for us to study history knowledge fully. The analyses of archive collection leads to new discovery about the state of a nation in the past and its various aspects. The institute or organization that does not have a archive collection is likely to face difficulties in collecting and updating their data and record. Therefore, learning from the mistakes of others, the emerging organization must focus on developing their personal archive which will help it maintain its records and progress.

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