A critical analysis of documentation at regional level: a case study

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This paper briefly evaluates the documentation strategies executed by a regional museum of India to provide an organised framework for its functioning. In this paper we highlight the transition of a documentation system specifying its merits and shortcomings. This case study is done on 'Shri Krishna Museum', a regional museum located in Kurukshetra (Haryana).

Documentation is the systematic classification that provides official information or evidence that serves as a record. A museum ceases to exist without a systematic documentation since it becomes difficult to manage its own collection.

Likewise, anomalies existing in a documentation system generate inherent flaws in the museum itself.

In the current case study, the museum houses a large collection centred around a mythological figure and deity 'Lord Krishna'. The museum building is divided into three blocks, with each block serving a particular purpose. It comprises of a heterogeneous collection such as: Bronze, wooden sculptures, Murals, Diorama's, Room-settings etc. In contrast with their ever-expanding collection, documentation strategies adopted by them is basic and archaic. Documentation components adopted by them are –
1.General accession Register (GAR)

2. Classified accession register (CAR)

3. Index cards

Their heterogeneous collection based on a common theme is demarcated accurately and stored well. The manual documentation

system adopted by them had bore the brunt of time and to overcome this problem they have devised a model and are proposing the digitization of the same. In their classified accession register (CAR), they have classified the objects on the basis of material. The museum is lacking specialised staff with a specific designation. Every nook and corner of the museum is managed by a curator and an artist. The documentation system was devised and planned in accordance with the needs of the museum, entirely by a curator. There is no one to assist him so it completely becomes a one man show.

In case of accession number, they have used archaic bipartite system which runs incongruent to the needs of a heterogeneous collection. Gradually, the collection is inflating with different objects. The prevalent bipartite system becomes inefficient in corroborating the systematic function of the documentation.

The current manual documentation is lying in a haphazard state without any proper care and conservation, which would lead to its deterioration and loss of evidence. In such a perplexed situation, the attempt for digitization will become defunct.

The third block of the museum which accommodates rare dioramas and life-size models has unfortunately not been documented. The museum does not keep a record of any de-accessioned object which becomes a major concern for such a large collection. If an object is rendered unworthy of being displayed then it is simply kept in the store-room. De-accessioning is never considered an option.

The museum authority accepts donation but they do not maintain a proper record of its loan objects. Considering the documentation system reiterated in the concept of new Museology, the documentation components such as 'de-accessioning' and 'Loan' practices

have become intrinsic for a smooth functioning of a museum.

At the end it is suffice to state that the evolutionary aspect of this museum is evident from its attempt to digitize their documentation system and curb the existing flaws. In order to accomplish their goal they have developed a proposal to the Kurukshetra Development Authority (KDA) and awaiting their response.