

Chapter 13

Preservation Management in Company Libraries

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ABSTRACT

From the library preservation point of view, it is important to distinguish two types of collections in special libraries. The first type is the general collection which serves for the daily library and information needs of clients. It is a time-limited collection and should be evaluated by its use. Good collection care is what is most necessary for the preservation of a general collection. The other type is the special collection which should be evaluated by its historical value. It is a permanent collection and should mostly be conserved in original format. In the preservation of this type of special collection, conservation treatment, reformatting, and other preservation measures would be necessary in addition to collection care. This chapter delves into the best practices in managing and preserving corporate and special libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Whether analogue or digital, a library cannot provide its services without its collections. Therefore one of the library's primary tasks is to keep its collection in usable condition. Although one tends to understand preservation as the treatment of damaged or deteriorated books and documents, it has a much broader spectrum of activities including repair, rebinding, protective enclosures, environmental control, reformatting, replacement, education, monitoring, disaster planning and disposal.

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Preservation is not limited to technical works but more of a managerial task which includes allocation of budget, staffing and staff education, priority setting for digitization, cooperation with other libraries, etc.

The definition of preservation, conservation, and restoration differ from country to country, and from profession to profession. Librarians and curators might have a different understanding of these vocabularies. In this chapter, preservation, conservation, and restoration are defined based on ISO 5127-2001: Information and documentation - Vocabulary. Thus, preservation refers to “all measures taken, including financial and strategic decisions, to maintain the integrity and extend the life of documents or collections” while conservation deals with “intervention techniques applied to prevent, arrest, or delay deterioration.” Restoration, on the other hand, refers to “actions taken to return a document which has suffered deterioration or damage as closely as practicable to its original state.”

Special libraries vary from governmental to private, big to small, open or closed to public, among others. Nevertheless, from the preservation point of view, there are common issues to be examined. In this chapter, the focus is on the case of preservation management in company libraries that are established within companies and mainly serve their employees, which could be applicable to other types of special libraries.

TWO TYPES OF COLLECTIONS IN COMPANY LIBRARIES

We see two types of collections in company libraries, namely, general collections and special collections. These are two different kinds of collections from the preservation point of view.

Books and documents of general collections in company libraries are collected to provide library and information services to its clients who are generally company employees. Because the general collection of company libraries is a service collection, the first principle of its preservation is to “keep books and documents as long as they are requested by the clients.” Some books are requested only for several years after acquisition while others for several decades. In either case, their fundamental characteristic is time-limited. At the same time, it is the content, or in other words, the information stored therein that are needed and not the physical books as artifacts. As long as there are service needs from the clients, a company library maintains books and documents as the important component of its collection. These should be cared for well and whenever necessary, are provided such treatments as repair, rebinding, boxing, photocopy, fumigation, etc.

Since a general collection is primarily a service collection, it is not necessary to maintain it eternally. When the collection is no longer requested or are requested only rarely by the library’s clientele, a logical preservation option to be taken would

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