

Collection, Documentation and Management of Anthropological Museum

by
Sanjay Shukla
Anthropological survey of India
Central regional Centre
Zonal Anthropological Museum
Nagpur-440006
Contact No.-9423636451
Email - sanjayansi@gmail.com

Introduction:

Anthropological Museum mainly focuses on the objects of material culture of the tribals along with hard evidences under evolutionary lineage comprising fossilized bones and stone tools. Dissemination of knowledge about the bio-cultural diversity with special emphases on evolutionary perspective is also gaining ground in the procurement of the specimens. It is always judicious to procure the objects currently in use by the contemporary population. Information as regard to its functional value and structural contents would also be discussed. For anthropological interest towards obtaining ethnographic material, not in use but carefully preserved by the ethnic group are discussed with equally importance. Such materials project the aspects of temporal change through time. Further, it extends opportunity to study the spatial features of the object as obtained from different community living in diverse ecological situation.

The paper attempts to discuss in detail about the salient changes evolved in the direction of evolution of the cultural objects with distinct functional and structural identity.

Along with traditional method of putting identification tag, General Accession Register, Index Card, Catalogue Card, an elaborate application of digitized format for vivid documentation has been given for the application of Microsoft access to the museum collection.

A special interest has been given by the author towards obtaining ethnographic material, not in use but, carefully preserve by the ethnic group.

Since documentation is the fundamental activity in a museum and is used as a basic source of information on the collection a discussion about the comprehensive documentation has been done.

The paper further elaborates the effective management of collection, storage, security and conservation and formulated acquisition policies by identifying the scope and limitations of the collection.

Effort has been made to highlight the collection materials to the researcher through publication.

The documents have provided information such as radiographs, analytical report etc for authentication at the time of theft/retrieval etc. have been taken in to care.

A vivid documentation accessed with detail information of some of the objects as available in the departments (AnSI) web sites and a separate software has been developed to highlight the objects of CRC, Museum, Nagpur.

Objective with methods:

The paper highlights the temporal change of the object through time. It extends opportunity to study the spatial features of the object as obtained from different community.

Changes perceived in the evolution of the object functionally and structurally (made of materials and shape etc.) for example, object used for storage and carrying like Basket, pottery, etc has been discussed.

Documentation records for collection, conservation. Preparing Index card, maintaining record in accession register, photography register and conservation register typing catalogue card and conservation card i.e. entire documentation processes for keeping information of a particular object have been discussed.

The objects which are with cultural relevance to the ethnic group from which it is procured and have some relevance to the socio-economic per se and religious belief of the population have been discussed.

Apart from cost of the material and importance of daily use the sentiment attached with the object has been given optimum priority and negotiated accordingly.

In case the object identified for procurement failed to be procured in spite of best efforts, its detail documentation like photography, videography including its functional utility have also been recorded.

In the current attempt, emphasis has been given to record the audio visual perspective of folk song – dance, ritual, fair, and festivals, etc.

Idea behind this attempt is to document the action display of rare musical instruments, dresses, and ornaments, etc which are gradually becoming vanished.

The nature of the object can be classified as organic and inorganic and a character such as its tensility (brittle, fragile) bio-degradability (prone to discoloration and deformity) has been kept in mind.

Discussion:

The paper discusses a complete inventory of the collection of artifacts. Microsoft Access has been used as a backend for storage and retrieve of all the fields that have been entered in the accession Register.

Photographs of each of the objects in thumbnail format and high resolution JPEG format have been stored in the separate folder. Linked to correspondence objects in the main accession Table retrieve has been done based on year of collection, area of collection, ethnic group from where the object has been procured.

The paper discussed classification of the collected object based on material used and its functional, form and structural and any other unique and generic

characteristics which have been incorporate in a separate table which may be linked to main accession table to facilitated retrieve data on these lines also. The paper observes about the thematic power point presentation which can also planned on the above line, directly from the Database.

Conclusion:

The identity of an Anthropological museum largely centers round the idea of evaluating any object in the direction of estimating the motive in the perspective of temporal and spatial flora.

In the present attempt the collection management started from said attitude and acceded to collections relevant to the socio-economic value of the object.

The structural and functional change of ethnographic materials are time specific and changing very fast with growing need of market. The impact of changing world view expresses through animal figures from traditional earthen horses to Dinosaur and even figures of African elephants has been highlighted in the study.

In the perspective of preservation and documentation, utmost care is taken to maintain the galleries with intermittent chemical treatment as required for the specific object.

Management of visitors are important and as per visitors need or interest the galleries of CRC Museum are developed. Museum is no more a static unit .Therefore, at time museum should reach the people to disseminate knowledge at their door steps.

