Digital Preservation in Archives with Reference to National Archives of India

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ABSTRACT: *There has been a revolutionize in the process of preservation of materials for posterity. In this digital era the concept of digital preservation is gaining importance. UNESCO is continuously emphasizing the significance of digital preservation of cultural heritage of the world in any form. It aims that information should be for all. Climate controlled storage facility, trained staff, timely checking of different types of Digital Medias, change of software or hardware whenever needed, regular power supply, regular users' orientation is necessary for the proper uptake of the digital documents. The paper discusses some aspects of digital preservation and digital preservation in National Archives of India.*

1. Introduction

India is a country of immense cultural heritage resources. With an estimated 5 million ancient manuscripts, India is the largest repository of manuscripts. Besides, a large amount of other cultural resources are available in various archives and museums in India. The preservation of these resources was never a priority subject, so large resources have either vanished or have gone out of India.

Preservation is an important function of any library, archive, information organization, etc., to use the preserved materials for the present and future generations. Various means and processes have been adopting since the existence of such organizations to preserve the materials. Traditionally speaking, preservation of materials has been done in response to the threat of destruction of the materials for future use. The ultimate purpose of preservation is to ensure protection of information of enduring value for access by present and future generations..

2. Objectives of Digital Preservation

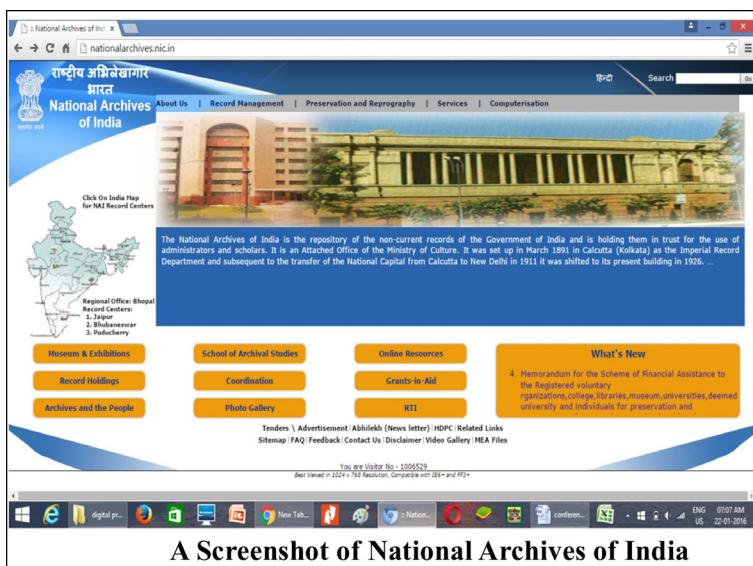The main ground of digital preservation is to achieve the following objectives:

• Providing continued access to digital material for both born digital and digitised material.

• Ensuring authenticity of preserved digital materials.

• Preserve physical media to avoid damage/deterioration by ensuring an environmental control.

• Changing the digital information in to newer and fresher format, if it is necessary.

• Achieving co-ordination of all efforts that are undertaken for preservation globally in order to achieve more synergy, to avoid redundancy and to reduce cost. This provides an effective infrastructure for collaboration by connecting different networks, institutions and individuals that are working in this field.

3. Benefits of Digital Preservation

• Electronic copies occupy millimetres of space rather than meters on shelf and the problems of space vanishes when libraries opt to digital medium

• Once books are converted to digital users can retrieve them in seconds by searching for words, combination of words, phrases or ideas.

• It helps to preserve rare and delicate objects without denying access to those who wish to study them.

4. National Archives of India

A Screenshot of National Archives of India

The genesis of the National Archives of India may be traced back to the year 1860. It marched towards the path of progress after independence to play a more dynamic and inspiring role in the archival field of the entire country. It witnessed manifold expansion of its activities since then in the field of accession of public records, acquisition of private papers/ collections and library material, records management, research and reference, publication, training, conservation, reprography, outreach programmes, coordination at national and international level and expansion of office at regional areas.

5. Digital Preservation in National Archives of India

National Archives of India is the nodal agency of Government of India for the implementation of the Public Records Act, 1993 and the Public Records Rules, 1997 made under the Act. The Act regulates the management, administration and preservation of all Public Records of the Central Government and the Union Territory administrations. The National Archives of India is responsible for not only keeping in safe custody, the records of the various Ministries/ Departments of the Government of India, but is also engaged in devising suitable mechanism to streamline the management of their records in a systematic manner so that they can be used by administrators and scholars at ease. It also advises the State Governments, Custodial Institutions etc., in proper upkeep and management of their records. Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune, a national initiative of the Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications and Information

Technology (MCIT), Government of India signed an MoU with the National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi which is an Attached Office of the Ministry of Culture responsible for the preservation of all official records of the Government of India. This MoU has been signed as part of the project of Centre of Excellence for Digital Preservation sanctioned by the Department of Information Technology, MCIT, and Government of India.

6. Conclusion

The Librarians have the moral responsibility of preservation and conservation, vested in them. Books and other media in a Library preserve facts, thoughts and accomplishments and in a word, the record of human civilisation. The past records constitute a natural resource, and are indispensable to the present generation, as well as to the generations to come. There is, therefore, a moral imperative to preserve the legacy. Our past reality and experiences expand the horizon of our future possibility..

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