

## 1. Introduction

This paper attempts to study the various methods of 'Collection Care' practiced by various museum around the world and agreed by International council of museums (ICOM). Alongside, an honest attempts will be made to understand the existing local methods in collection cares of objects in Bhutan.

I consider museum object to that of new born baby. Which is very fragile and precious. Similar approaches need to apply to when handling the object. When we discuss about collection care, we cannot ignore the physical structures in which collection are stored and displayed. In Bhutanese context, Dzongs, lhakhangs, private houses loosely qualify as museum besides existing museum structure (Sangay Tashi, 2017).

Unlike in western countries, Bhutanese collection are either stored or displayed aforementioned museum structure in mixed mode display– meaning a gallery can have objects starting from textile to bones. In addition to, it is mostly housed in 17<sup>th</sup> century building except for Textile museum, thus challenging Bhutanese museum professional and managers in collection care.

For this study, 'The ABCs Collection Care' training manual developed by Tessa Gillies and Neal Putt will be referred to and adopted for discussing collection care of museum. This paper will try and explore local methods as much as possible.

## 2. Museum

Museum as a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (ICOM,2007). Further an alternative definition of museum will be finalized in 26<sup>th</sup> ICOM General Conference Prague 2022.

Museums is also viewed as cultural and educational institutions concentrates on preserving and conserving tangible cultural heritage, also strive to revive and promote intangible cultural heritage. This is done through education and learning, collection, conservation, research, exhibition and publication.

In today's world, museums cannot simply wait for visitors to come and visit. A museum has to constantly respond to the every changing taste of the visitors. This could be achieved through close collaboration with different stake holders- such as government, cultural tourism industry, and other museums (Sangay Tashi, 2017).

Idealistically, such collaborations seem easy, but, practically it is very hard to bring all the stake holders on the same page. As we can see such collaboration as threat to survival of stake holders- view as a competitor rather than facilitator (Wharton, Glenna, 2005). Thus, in developing countries, survival

of museums is much harder comparing to the developed countries as country or a community itself serve as living museum.

### **3. Methodology**

When the sculpture's tools enter a museum collection, they cease to fulfil their original function and become part of collections which are to be preserved in perpetuity. Their new role (function) is to preserve and display evidence of the past. This is invariably the final or curating phase of the object's life (Caple, 2006). If any object is to function effectively as part of a museum collection then it must be prevented from corroding or decaying; preserved in its present state since loss or deterioration would reduce or eliminate its ability to perform its museum functions of being a research subject or display item (Appel, G.N,1974).

It is the efforts to preserve, balanced with the needs to reveal and investigate the object and its values which can be understood as conservation (Caple, 2000, 33-35). Activities, particularly those associated with preserving the object, that occur without physical interaction with the object can be regarded as preventive conservation.

Preventive conservation can be defined as any measure that reduces the potential for, or prevents, damage. It focuses on collections rather than individual objects, non-treatment rather than treatment. In practical terms, handling, storage and management of collections (including emergency planning) are critical elements in a preventive conservation methodology (Getty Conservation Institute 1992).

### **4. Preventive conservation**

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#### **4.1 Temperature**

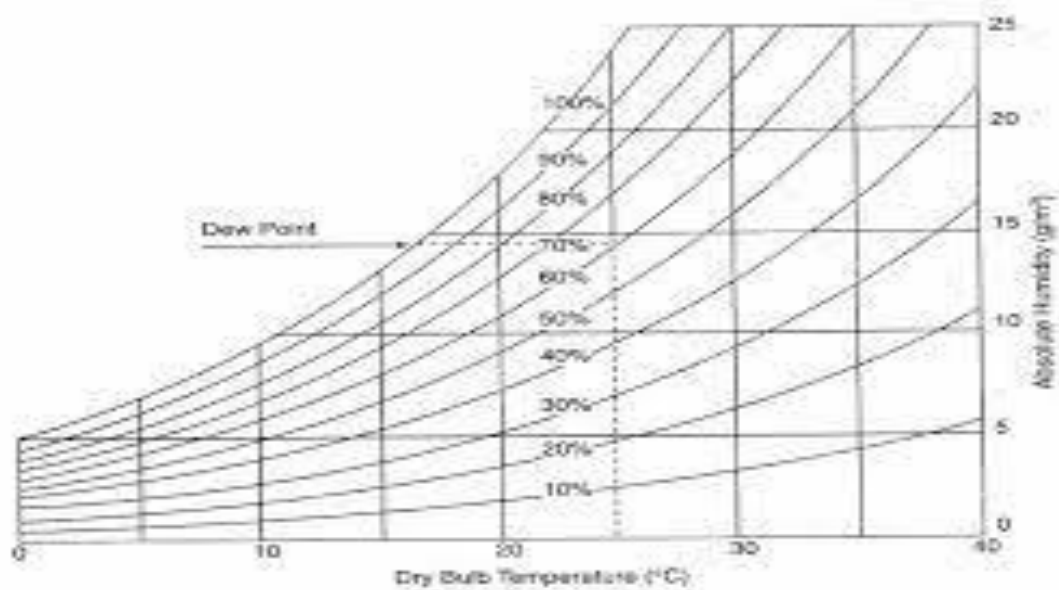
Maintaining required temperature for any this is important for longer life. In Buddhism, we stress importance in balancing five elements. Physical sufferings and mental sufferings are the result of not able to balance the five elements. In similar ways, maintenance of required temperature and humidity in the storage and museum gallery is very important for giving longer life to the objects. The ideal temperature of a gallery should be 65 to 68 degree Fahrenheit +/- 2 degrees.

Degree Celsius = (Fahrenheit -32)x5/9

Degree Fahrenheit = (degree Celsius x 9/5)+ 32

## 4.2 Humidity

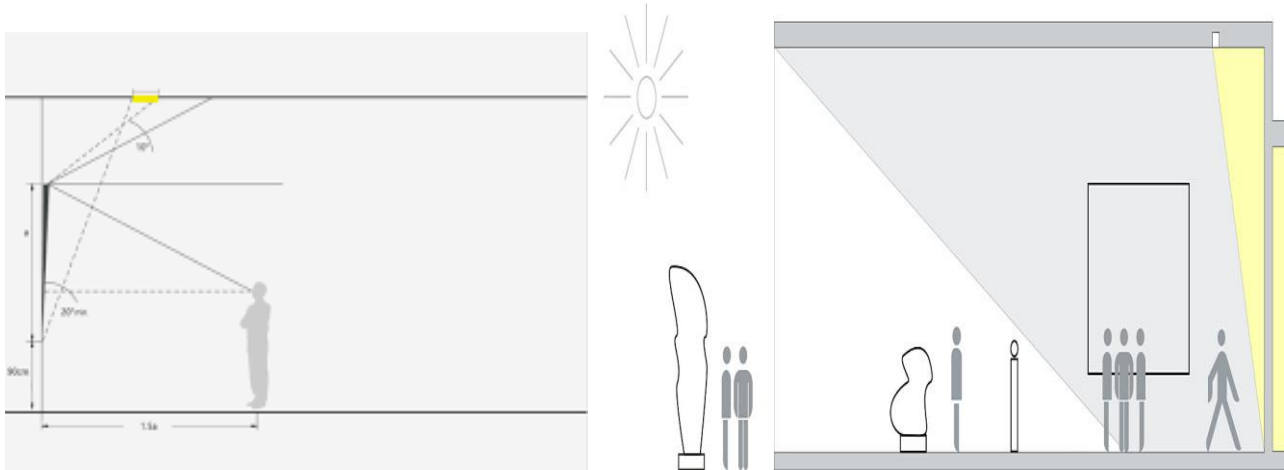
Humidity plays very important role in preventing objects from deteriorating further. The right humidity in museum is 50% however it be managed in-between 40 to 60% +\_ 3% . More humidity means lots of fungal growth and less humidity result in bristling causing fragile objects to fall apart or otherwise breaking the components loosely.



## 4.3 Lighting

In museum world, light is able to upgrade exhibition space to become qualitative cultural brand-ranging from shop, café and sculpture garden to exhibition. However, light can cause damage to collections. The amount of damage is determined by the intensity and type of light, the time of exposure, and the natural resistance of the object's components. Light damage is not only limited to fading: overexposure can also cause weakening, discoloration, yellowing and embrittlement. Damage caused by light exposure is both cumulative and irreversible. The exposure of an artifact to light is a product of illumination level and time:

$$\text{Light level (lux)} \times \text{Time (hours)} = \text{Exposure (lux hours)}$$



#### 4.4 Cleanliness

As I introduce in the introduction, museum object is like a new born baby. Therefore, absolute cleanliness is required before handling any object in the storage or in display. Museums usually don't allow visitors to take any edible things in the museum gallery. Moreover, most object in the museum are not allowed to touch, unless it is meant for other differently able people. For museum professionals, following procedures are required to follow.

- ✓ Wash your hand with soap
- ✓ Dry your hand
- ✓ Always use hand glove
- ✓ Use coat over your attire

#### 5. Handling and Moving Object

##### 5.1 Handling of Object

It is very important know how to handle object. Wrong handling of object do more harm than natural cause. Two common cause of object are improper handling and casual handling by museum staffs. Unless required, objects should be avoided handling - even carrying to short distance should be done with certain precaution to prevent damage and accident.

- ✓ Cleanliness is essential – wash your hand and dry before handling
- ✓ Handle object as little as possible
- ✓ Plan your movements ahead of time and don't hurry
- ✓ Examine objects strength and weakness before handling
- ✓ Consider any object as the most precious
- ✓ Never lift an object by its handle

- ✓ Always use both hand

## 5.2 Moving Object

It is recommended not to move object frequently. If at all we need to move, following steps must be taken.

- ✓ Prepare a place ahead of time to receive the artifacts
- ✓ Use both the hand or
- ✓ Place the artifacts in the cushioned box.
- ✓ Carry it with both the hands
- ✓ Place object firmly in the box
- ✓ When carrying small object, use one hand to support bottom
- ✓ When moving bigger objects, use help of friend
- ✓ Lift the object with body
- ✓ Never drag the object
- ✓ Don't work backwards
- ✓ Always ask someone to open door for you

## 5.3 Preparing a Safe Place

In museum, when display cases and other shelves for exhibits are cleaned, objects displayed need to be removed. This is to make sure that we don't accidentally knock off the object.

- ✓ Prepare table away from the working space or in next room
- ✓ Cover the table with clean shit or paper
- ✓ Please don't use new paper

## 6. Housekeeping in Museum

It is very important understand housekeeping in museum. This will help 90% of object from future conservation work. We need to consider the following factor under consideration.

- ✓ **Size** – storage size must be adequately spacious to hold the residual collection with rooms for new collection/acquisition
- ✓ **Accessibility** – storage room should be easily accessible and on site to reduce difficulties in moving objects
- ✓ **Security** – storage site should be secured
- ✓ **Environment** – The room should be environmentally safe and possibly regulated with temperature and relative humidity
- ✓ **Location-** if possible avoid attics and basement for storage purposes. And void rooms with furnace, hot water heater, overhead pipe and electrical panel

- ✓ Regular visit must be carried out to observe any insect attacks on the object displayed.

## **7. Conclusion**

For so long, Bhutanese have been proudly talking about having rich and unique cultural heritages. However, the pressure to preserve these cultural heritage has become more pressing and prominent from the last century. Of two, intangible cultural heritage has been lagging behind in term of preserving, promoting – we are failing to carry out simple documentation for instance.

We may conclude that this is partially due to influx of unfiltered popular global pop culture. Further, our inclination towards ‘western culture’ is dragging younger generation away from Bhutanese way of physical presentation to intellectual thinking. Therefore, I foresee more confusion and confrontation within society- noticeably between older and younger generation, commercial entity and orthodox, village community and town community and so on. In such times, museum could become binary bridge to connect near but distant society by engaging more with community and youth to disseminate importance of collection care of cultural heritage. As I always argue that cultural heritage is the unifying force of a nation particular for Bhutan.

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