ABSTRACT

Digitization and digital preservation in India and Iran are very vital to preserve cultural heritage collections, and also make them accessible to the scholars and public. The investigator has attempted to study the digitization and digital preservation activities in the select libraries in India and Iran. There are document resources, especially manuscripts and rare books, which are very valuable, but they are not allowed to be accessed due to concerns of damage to original documents. By digitization, the originals can be safely secured and the copies used by researchers for any required information.

The review of literature revealed that there was lack of study on digitization and digital preservation of cultural heritage both in India and Iran. Therefore, to understand the challenges faced, the investigator felt the necessity to study the state of digitization and digital preservation of the heritage collection both in India and Iran, using present accessibility in the select libraries and collections that have been digitized, and the ongoing programmes in this field.

For the purpose of the present study, the investigator identified fifteen libraries, eight in India and seven in Iran which possess heritage collection and have initiated digital preservation activities.

The data related have been captured through questionnaires to the Heads of Libraries and users of the libraries. The investigator also interacted with the Heads of the Libraries as well as users of the respective libraries to ensure the validity of responses.

Some of the major findings of the study were that a majority of the libraries have digitized heritage collection for the purpose of preservation and enhancement of access. Manuscripts and rare books were the most preferable collections for digitization among Indian and Iranian libraries. Indian libraries have invested on 'digital conversion' and 'human resource', while Iranian libraries have invested on 'digital conversion' and 'metadata capture' for digitization.

There was need to improve the infrastructure for digitization in both Indian and Iranian libraries. A large majority of Indian libraries used 'AC with low temperature' and 'chemical treatment' for preservation, whereas a majority of Iran libraries used 'anti-termite' and 'chemical treatment' for preservation of heritage collection. Microfilming was the most preferable method among Indian and Iranian libraries for preservation of heritage collections.
The main problems faced by Indian libraries were human resource and IT support, while inadequate funding was the main problem for a majority of Iranian libraries. A large segment of Indian libraries stored digitized material on local computers and CD-ROMs/DVDs, while a majority of Iran libraries stored digitized materials on departmental servers and central institution servers.

For the development of digital preservation, a large majority of Indian libraries preferred 'an in-house digital repository', while a majority of Iranian libraries preferred 'National Digital Repository for local government'.

The study also revealed that, there was demand for using digitized manuscripts and rare books, by the respondents. Hence, it is opined that libraries should digitize more of their resources based on the materials that are in demand. Most of the respondents preferred online open access for using of digitized materials. Hence, it is recommended that access to digital material in the field of heritage resources should be made on-line and free of charge.

It can be concluded that digitization will help to preserve heritage resources as well as retrieval of information. What is most important is augmenting the existing programme of sharing the resources in the holdings of these libraries in the networked environment with scholars and the general public. The heritage holdings of India and Iran libraries have to be freely accessed and shared for mutual and reciprocal benefits. For the purpose of the digitized collection of libraries together, there is need for developing the database of the holdings and facilitate on-line access. This venture in fact has to be encouraged and supported by all concerned, as this programme has to be developed and nurtured on a co-operative basis, after settling the issue of copyright.

Creation of a national digital repository will be of immense help to facilitate access to the nation’s heritage resources encouraging and sharing information among libraries. Venture in this direction avoids duplication of efforts in digitization, and ensure sustainability of the nations resource.