

Impact of Information Empowerment on Museum Functionaries Regarding Textile Conservation

Dr. Sudha Babel¹, Dr. Manisha Choudhary²

¹Professor & Head, Department of Textiles & Apparel Designing, College of Home Science, Udaipur, India

²School Lecturer, Residency School, Udaipur, India

Abstract: *To achieve the objectives pre and post experimental research design was used for knowledge test of sixty museum functionaries. For information empowerment an information package containing detailed information about textile conservation was developed in the form of booklet, entitled "Textile Conservation". The information package was delivered to the respondents in a four days training programme. Before the exposure to the information package majority of the respondents had inadequate knowledge about textile conservation.. After the training, majority of the respondents belonged to good knowledge category in all the aspects of textile conservation. Gain in knowledge was found to be good.*

Keywords: Information empowerment, museum functionaries, textile conservation,

1. Introduction

In today's world when the nation tends to involve themselves in political-ideological conflicts, the artistic and cultural creations act as a bonding force and therefore, their preservation should be of utmost concern. Conservation is the youngest in museum discipline. Museums have four classic functions: collection, preservation, research and presentation of the collection to the public. Preservation is the most fundamental of these responsibilities. Conservation is the technology by which preservation is achieved. Textile is easily perishable museum material due to its organic nature and hence they deteriorate more with biotic as well as abiotic factors. Preventive conservation is based on the principle that deterioration is not inevitable and 'aging' is only a multiplier of known and generally controllable causes. The major causes are environmental: light, temperature, humidity and atmospheric gases. To these may be added mechanical damage due to mishandling and inadequate support; chemical damage due to contact with reactive materials and biological damage by microorganisms and insects. Most of these factors can be controlled. Thus, the methodology of preventive conservation is indirect, controlling the causes reduces deterioration.

Conservation plays an important role to maximize the life of textiles. Conservative textiles help to learn the traditional designs and styles as they are the base for the upcoming modern design forms. A rich collection of beautifully decorated textiles which are rich in techniques, diversified fashion and full of color and pattern provides a wealth of understanding which is not possible through the written word alone. Conservative textiles show the rich cultural heritage for a long term period. And this is achieved through maintaining the museum environment, proper way of storage, display, repair and stabilization of textiles through various needle techniques, natural and synthetic adhesives, and support and reinforcement techniques etc. A growing regard for textiles are valuable historical artifacts which helps to guide for future fashions. The present study will enable one to establish communication with the distant past as well as to extend it to future generations. The museum

functionaries are required to make many decisions regarding the acceptance of new technology in the area of textile conservation. However, lack of technical knowledge regarding textile conservation is seen in museum functionaries. So there is a need to educate the museum functionaries about textile conservation. The study will impart technical knowledge to the museum functionaries /caretakers of small museums to protect and preserve whatever material of our rich textile tradition is left with us. Keeping this in view, the present study was conducted for information empowerment of museum functionaries regarding proper way of conserving textiles in museums. The present work will be principally "Information empowerment of museum functionaries regarding textile conservation" is a modest attempt to present an analysis of museums of the Rajasthan state. In fact, this study is the first of its kind in Rajasthan.

2. Methodology

The study was carried out in twenty museums of Rajasthan. From each museum three respondents were selected for information empowerment. Self structured knowledge test for museum functionaries consist of questions related to background information of respondents and questions related to knowledge about textile conservation i.e. preventive conservation of textiles, caring of textiles on display, caring of textiles related to storage and remedial conservation of textiles etc. The knowledge test included both open ended as well as close ended and dichotomized response (Yes/No) type questions related to preventive conservation of textiles, caring of textiles on display, caring of textiles in storage and remedial conservation of textiles. In all there were 60 questions related to different aspects of textile conservation. Scores were assigned to each question keeping in view its relative importance in carrying out the particular activity. The scoring pattern was finalized with a panel of five experts.

Aspects wise distribution of questions and their scores

S. No.	Aspects	No. of questions	Maximum scores
1.	Preventive conservation of textiles	31	105
2.	Caring of textiles on display	5	27
3.	Caring of textiles in storage	11	42
4.	Remedial conservation of textiles	13	26
Total		60	200

Implementation of information package

On the very first day pre-test was done to assess the existing knowledge of the respondents, following four days training to deliver the information package. The respondents were exposed to the information package developed on textiles conservation.

Impact Assessment of information package

Post knowledge test of the respondents was measured after dissemination of information package using the same performa, to assess the knowledge gain. Data was collected in the form of post-test. To have uniformity in scoring knowledge scores obtained by the respondents were converted into mean percent score (MPS). The respondents were then distributed into three categories based on equal interval as Poor (Below 33), Average (34 to 66) and Good (More than 67).

3. Results and Discussions

This section reveals the background details of the subjects. The respondents were studied for the age, gender, education, monthly income, job experience, training received regarding conservation.

Table 1: Background information of the respondents
N=60

S. No.	Aspects	Categories	No of Respondents	
			(f)	(%)
1	Gender	a) Male	42	70
		b) Female	18	30
2	Age (in years)	a) 20-30	36	60
		b) 31-40	18	30
		c) 41 & above	06	10
3.	Caste	a) SC/ST	27	45
		b) Backward OBC	20	33.33
		c) General	13	21.66
4.	Education	a) up to primary	07	11.66
		b) up to middle	10	16.66
		c) up to metric	18	30.00
		d) up to high school	25	41.66
5.	Monthly Income (Rs.)	a) up to 5000	8	13.33
		b) 50000-10000	22	36.66
		c) 10000-20000	18	30.00
		d) above 20000	12	20.00
6.	Work experience	a) Past 10 years	36	60.00
		b) More than 10 years	14	23.33
		c) More than 20 years	10	16.66
7.	Training	a) Obtained	16	9.60
		b) Not obtained	44	90.40

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of the respondents by gender. It was found that out of total 60 gallery attendants, 70 per cent were males while 30 per cent were females. The data shows that majority (60%) of respondents was in the age group of 20-30 years, 30 per cent were

between the age group of 30-40 years and remaining 10 per cent of them were above 40 years. The caste wise distribution of the respondents which highlight that 45 per cent respondents were from schedule caste and tribe followed by backward caste (33.33%). Only 21.66 per cent respondents belonged to general caste. The data bring to light that 11.66 per cent of respondents had up to primary education, 16.66 per cent had middle education, 30 per cent were metric, 41.66 per cent had high school education and none of them were graduate and technically qualified. Table further depicts that 36.66 per cent of the respondents were in the income range of Rs. 5000-10000 per month, 12 per cent were in above 20,000 and 13.33 per cent were up to Rs. 5000 per month and. Remaining 18 per cent of them were in the income range of Rs.10000 -20000 per month.

Table portrays that majority of the workers (60%) had work experience of past ten years, while 23.33 per cent respondents had work experience of more than 10 years and remaining 16.66 per cent respondents had more than twenty years work experience. Majority of the respondents (90.40%) had not attended any type of training regarding conservation whereas only 9.60 per cent of them had obtained training.

Development of information package

The researcher developed information package on "Textile Conservation" for generating awareness among museum functionaries, by consulting resource persons (Textile conservators), reviewing literature, searching internet etc. Awareness aids viz. pamphlets and booklets were prepared and distributed to the respondents. To test and evaluate the appropriateness of developed information package, a panel of ten experts who were the subject matter specialist from the field of Textile & Apparel Designing and Department of Archaeology & Conservation were selected.

Overall knowledge gain regarding textile conservation

A self structured knowledge test was prepared to assess the existing knowledge level of respondents regarding textile conservation. The Performa was administered by personal interview method to 60 respondents. It is necessary that the museum functionaries should have good knowledge regarding preventive conservation of textiles, caring of textiles on display, caring of textiles in storage and remedial conservation of textiles to conserve the textiles for future. The purpose of the study was to empower the museum functionaries regarding textile conservation. Therefore training was organized on textile conservation to empower the museum functionaries.

The activities in training programme include information dissemination through lectures and interactive session with museum functionaries. They raised several queries, which were solved by the researcher quite confidently. The researcher also distributed them a booklet entitled "Textile Conservation" emphasizing on preventive conservation of textiles, caring of textiles on display, caring of textiles in storage and remedial conservation of textiles. The researcher also provided them several internet sites to explore and contact resource persons for detail enquires.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents on the basis of overall knowledge gain regarding textile conservation
 N=60

S. No.	Aspects	Existing knowledge(Before training)				Knowledge gain(After training)				Gain (%)
		Good	Average	Poor	MPS	Good	Average	Poor	MPS	
1.	Preventive conservation of textiles	5 (8.33)	25 (41.88)	30 (50)	35.07	57 (95)	3 (5)	0	93.33	58.25
2.	Caring of textiles on display	30 (50)	15 (25)	15 (25)	50.92	56 (93.33)	4 (6.66)	0	90.37	39.45
3.	Caring of textiles in storage	6 (10)	12 (20)	42 (70)	33.09	55 (91.66)	5 (8.33)	0	92.46	59.37
4.	Remedial conservation of textiles	10 (16.73)	15 (25)	35 (58.33)	30.12	55 (91.66)	5 (8.33)	0	90.06	59.94
5.	Overall Knowledge	12.75 (21.25)	16.75 (27.91)	30.5 (50.83)	37.03	55.75 (92.91)	4.25 (7.08)	0	91.55	54.25

Note- Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Post knowledge test of the respondents was measured after dissemination of information package and lectures using the same knowledge test. Regarding the overall gain in knowledge of respondents, Table 3 depicts that 92.91 per cent of respondents had good knowledge and 7.08 per cent respondents were in the category of average knowledge group. None of the respondent was in the poor knowledge category which indicates the gain in knowledge. Regarding preventive conservation of textiles, 93.33 per cent respondents possessed good knowledge, 90.37 per cent respondents had good knowledge about caring of textiles on display, 92.46 per cent respondents had good knowledge about caring of textiles in storage and 90.06 per cent respondents had good knowledge about remedial conservation of textiles. The mean per cent score in different aspects ranged from 90.06-93.33 which indicates the increase in knowledge of the respondents after exposure to training programme. Finding indicates the gain of 39.45-59.94 per cent in the knowledge of respondents regarding all the aspects of textile conservation. The overall knowledge gain was found to be 54.25 per cent which indicate good gain of knowledge of the respondents. The reason may be interest and ease of the learning of the topic and its affect on gain in knowledge.

Table 3: Knowledge acquisition of respondents regarding textile conservation
 N=60

Knowledge Parameter	Pre - Test		Post - Test		Z	Result
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Preventive conservation of textiles	36.83	17.80	98.0	8.71	-112.44	***
Caring of textiles on display	13.75	6.49	18.13	1.91	-59.16	***
Caring of textiles in storage	13.90	7.7	38.83	3.87	-99.72	***
Remedial conservation of textiles	7.83	4.54	23.41	1.93	-87.03	***
Overall Knowledge	17.63	9.13	46.16	4.01	-89.58	***

(*** < 0.001)

The Table 3 clearly highlights that significant difference was found in the knowledge of respondents at pre and post

exposure stage on different aspects i.e. Preventive conservation of textiles (Mean 36.83± 17.80 and 98.0± 8.71), Caring of textiles on display (Mean 13.75± 6.49 and 18.13± 1.91), Caring of textiles in storage (Mean 13.90± 7.7and 38.83± 3.87), Remedial conservation of textiles (Mean 7.83± 4.54 and 23.41± 1.93) and Overall Knowledge(Mean 17.63± 9.13 and 46.16 ± 4.01).The mean differences at post exposure stage on all the aspects were comparatively higher than that of means at pre exposure stage of respondents. These differences clearly highlighted the impact of information package on the knowledge of respondents on different aspect of textile conservation.

4. Conclusion

For information empowerment an information package containing detailed information about textile conservation was developed in the form of booklet, entitled “Textile Conservation”. The information package was delivered to the respondents in a four days training programme. Before the exposure to the information package majority of the respondents had inadequate knowledge about textile conservation with mean percent score ranged 30.12- 50.92 per cent. Overall existing knowledge of the respondents was found 37.03 which reveals that the museum functionaries had poor knowledge regarding all the aspects of textile conservation. After the training, majority of the respondents belonged to good knowledge category in all the aspects of textile conservation. Gain in knowledge was found to be good. The technique of conservation is a “Protective science” which preserves the antiquities and works of art from falling to pieces. The present study has been made an effort to empower the museum functionaries regarding textile conservation to save our cultural heritage for present and future.

References

- [1] Gairola, T.R.1960.The cleaning and preservation of Organic material. Handbook of chemical conservation of museum objects.pp1-18.
- [2] Mary,F.2007. “The Care and Preservation of Antique Textiles and Costumes.” *Henry Ford Museum*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textile_preservation 11 April 2010

- [3] Mathur, D.K.1982.Deterioration of textiles and their conservation. *Conservation of cultural property in India*.**15**: 106-110.
- [4] Neelima,G.2005.Development of an intervention programme for the preservation of textile antiquities in the museums of northern India. Ph. D. thesis submitted to Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana.
- [5] Pathak ,A.1998. Renovated textile gallery at the National Museum, New Delhi. *ICON Journal of the national Museum Institute*.**50** : 69-71.
- [6] Singh, A.P.1987.. Conservation and Museum Techniques. pp. 84-85.

Author Profile

Dr. Sudha Babel acquired her B.Sc, specialization in Home Science and her M.Sc Clothing & Textiles and M.ED in Education. Seeking further academic excellence, she did her Ph.D. in Textiles and Apparel Designing. She is also computer literate and expert in using Textile & Apparel designing software. Her career path is versatile with teaching experience at different colleges. Currently she is working as Professor, Head and Scientist -1 in the Textiles and Apparel designing department, College of Home Science, MPUAT, Udaipur. Dr. Babel has authored good number of Research papers, Booklets, practical manuals, popular and technical articles sharing her expertise. Reading, writing, creative apparel designing, making contribution through research and training related to women empowerment, waste utilization and environment cleanliness, value addition of traditional textiles and embroideries etc. are her areas of interest.

Dr. Manisha Choudhary is Ph.D. in Textiles and Apparel Designing. She has published research articles in international, national journal and participated in many national and International level conference in and around Rajasthan. At present she is working as school lecturer at Udaipur.

