



## Exploring the Status of Special and Rare Collections: A Qualitative Study

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**This study attempts to discuss the current scenario of rare collections available in the libraries of Lahore city. Lahore is capital of the Punjab province in Pakistan. This study seeks to explore the various aspects such as acquisition, organization, access, preservation & conservation of rare collection of libraries of Lahore, Pakistan. The study is qualitative in nature; based on multiple case study design. A multiple case study helps the researchers in finding the differences among various cases. A semi-structured interview guide was used for data collection tool. Seven interviews of library professionals from four libraries (cases) were conducted. The observation and document analysis of log registers of the cases (libraries) were also done wherever facilitated. It was found that the potential of rare collections remains untapped in the libraries of Lahore. Findings also established that separate funds were not allocated to the public libraries of Lahore for the acquisition and management of the rare collection. This paper identifies the current status and issues in acquisition, management, access and use of rare collection at public libraries of Lahore, Pakistan.**



**Keywords:** Rare collection; Special collection preservation; Rare collection digitization; Special collection in libraries; Pakistan's rare collection.

## INTRODUCTION

The study explores the treasure trove of rare collections housed in the libraries of Lahore city. Rare material refers to “any item included in a library’s special collection because of the age, historical value, craftsmanship, rarity (as in the case of autographs, letters or diaries), and other items of varying significance” (Potter & Holley, 2010, p. 3).

Manuscripts are also considered as the most precious heritage of human civilization. These are the mirrors of society which reflect major aspects of cultural life, customs, traditions and values of the community. Manuscripts tell about the past events and achievements of a civilization including literary taste, educational status and creativity of the people (Mazumdar, 2009). Archives play a vital role to understand the history and culture (Gangnes, 2018).

Rare collections are important for researchers as well as students (Allen, 1999). Students show positive response when they understand that rare material can play an integral role in their research work (Alvarez, 2006). Libraries acquire rare material through purchase and donations (Ansorge, 2016; Haddad, 2000). Value of rare books, manuscripts and photos increased when these are exposed to the people (Allen, 1999). For the present use, rare books which are of great value must be digitized (Kashimura et al., 1998). The texts of archival value need to be preserved to ensure the uninterrupted connection of the knowledge. In fact, the human also learns from past experiences which are shared through the books (Liebert, 1981). Similarly, researchers recommend the conservation and preservation of rare collection. Investigators also highlight the need of trained and skilled staff for handling of rare material housed in the libraries (Landon, 1979; Roberts, 1967).

The existence of libraries is obvious from the ancient world. The mission of libraries changes with the passage of time. However, the main focus of libraries is to keep archives of works of intellects, research and scholarship, religious and personal status for public use or as a symbol of national pride. In the Muslims rule era, these records were mainly used for research purpose and preserved properly for the future use. These rulers introduced calligraphic art of writing in the sub-continent which resulted in the production of Quranic (religious book) and other manuscripts in different languages (Warraich & Tahira, 2010).



Pakistan came into being in 1947. Unfortunately; Pakistan could not inherit its appropriate share from the repository of the manuscript collections of the sub-continent. Two record rooms which were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Lahore and Karachi held a rich collection of official records and about half of them were handwritten. Many new universities were established in Pakistan after partition. These institutes managed to acquire a number of manuscripts. Apart from them, there were several personal collections which contained valuable manuscripts. A number of them are not still beyond access. There are approximately two million manuscripts in Pakistan. This collection of manuscripts consists of a range of subjects, themes, languages and aesthetics (Khan, n. d.).

Lahore is the capital city of the Punjab province and the second largest city of Pakistan. This city also has a good reputation regarding the educational opportunities in the arts, science and technology disciplines (Sabri et al., 2011). It is also one of the biggest industrial cities of Punjab (Hussain et al., 1998). Lahore Museum is one of the most popular visiting site of the country among locals and foreigners, heads of the countries, famous personalities etc. due to its name in manuscript, calligraphy, and cultural as well as historical contexts. The author further highlighted that more than 5000000 visitors visit this place every year (Rehmani, 1999). Punjab Public Library and Dayal Singh Public Library were the biggest public libraries of the country. These libraries are enriched with the rare collections. Punjab University Library possessed the largest manuscripts collection in Pakistan and it is one of the major libraries in Lahore which possessed 255,400 manuscripts (Warrach&Tahira, 2010; Khurshid, 1990). However, one study highlighted that there were about 200,000 manuscripts in Pakistan (Qutab, 2012). Considering the importance of Lahore based libraries and rich collection, this study aims to explore the status of the rare collection housed in these institutions. The following cases (libraries) were selected based on their collection and importance to fulfil the study objectives.

### **Lahore Museum, Lahore (Case 1)**

National Museum Lahore has a collection gallery of rare manuscripts which were separated from the Museum's library in 1983. This collection gallery contains a large collection of rare material dating back from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. About 40-50 Quranic manuscripts are also included in this collection. Some of them belong to the Abbasid period. Moreover, paintings dating back to the Mughal, Sikh and British eras are also part of this collection including personal collections and letters



of known literary persons. Some 1423 manuscripts mostly in the Persian language are also available in this collection. Similarly, the library of Lahore Museum has also a rich collection of rare material (Case 1 P 1, Personal Communication, Lahore, May 9, 2016).

### **The University of the Punjab Library, Lahore (Case 2)**

Punjab University Library (PUL) was established in 1873 as the "Punjab College Library". The Punjab College got the status of a university in 1882 and the Punjab College Library became the Punjab University Library (Warraich & Tahira, 2010).

The total manuscript collection in the Library is more than 22,000 titles. There are manuscripts and dissertations in Urdu, Arabic, Persian and local languages in the library while the number of manuscripts in Sanskrit and Hindi is 1871 (Punjab University Library, n. d., para. 8).

Manuscript section of this library contains about 24000 titles written in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Sanskrit and Punjabi languages. Out of them, 1200 manuscripts are in Arabic and 9075 are written in Sanskrit (Khan, n. d).

### **The Punjab Public Library, Lahore (Case 3)**

Punjab Public Library was established in 1884 and it is the country's largest and oldest public library. The size of the Punjab Public Library is 22,940 sq.ft (Haider, 1997). Punjab Public Library contains 1100 manuscripts written mainly in Arabic and Persian languages. A manuscript of Persian translation by Mulla Abdul Qadir Bdayuni and five manuscripts of the Persian translation of Mahabharata are also included in this collection.

### **Dayal Singh Public Library, Lahore (Case 4)**

Dayal Singh Public Library was the second largest public library of the country. It was founded in 1908 (Khurshid, 1990). About 2000 manuscripts are included in the collection of this library. Some of the important manuscripts are as under:

- Al Fawaid all Ziaiah by Mulla Haji (877 A.H.)
- Tafseer e Hussaini by WaizKashfi (993 A.H.)
- Tazkarah Sheikh Adam Binnori.

Considering the importance of rare material of this library in the era of Zia ul Haq (the ex-Chief of Army Staff and the President of Pakistan), some part of it was taken to the National Archives for digitization and it was promised that this

material will be returned to the library. Unfortunately, this commitment could not fulfil yet (Khan, n. d).

Considering the efforts of the stakeholders to preserve and digitize the world's data, the present study is intended to highlight the prospects of acquisition, organization & access, staff skills, preservation & conservation of rare material in the libraries of Lahore. Researchers give importance to the acquisition, organization, management, preservation, conservation of such collection (Allen 1999; Alvarez, 2006; Harris & Weller, 2012; Hunter et al., 2010; Jones, 2017; Mazumdar, 2009; Michel, 2005; Nishioka et al., 2018; Potter & Holley, 2010; Wiederkehr, 2018; Williams, 1985). Worldwide, plenty of research has been conducted on rare material (Allen, 2012; Ansorge, 2016; Harris & Weller, 2012; Tough, 2016). In Pakistan, few studies have been also conducted (Jaswal, 2016; Naseer & Mahmood, 2014; Qutab, 2012; Qutab et al., 2014; Rafiq & Ameen, 2013; Warraich & Tahira, 2010). However, there is a dearth of literature on status of rare collection in Public libraries of Lahore. The recommendations made by the study will be helpful for the policy makers and other stakeholders such as institutions offering library education, libraries and practitioners. The study will also contribute to existing body of literature on rare material which will facilitate the future researchers in conducting their research.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the practices of libraries of Lahore about acquisition, organization and dissemination of rare collection.
2. To know the process of preservation and conservation of the rare collections.
3. To identify the skills of staff involved in managing the rare collection.
4. To obtain suggestions from authorities for better acquisition, organization, preservation and conservation of the rare collection.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the different aspects of acquisition, organization and access of rare material in libraries of Lahore?
2. What is the process of preservation and conservation of rare collection?
3. What are the skills of staff involved in handling the rare material?
4. What are the suggestions of authorities for better acquisition, organization, preservation and conservation of rare material?

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of the literature was done by accessing the relevant studies from international journals' sites, using HEC (Higher Education Commission) of Pakistan subscribed databases, accessing local authors' papers, Google Scholar pages etc. Studies conducted at national and international level regarding rare material's status, scenario, acquisition, management, access, usage, and preservation, problems etc. were reviewed and included in this section.

Rare collection serves the purpose of sharing intellectual heritage with the current and future generations. It is obvious that carelessness or improper handling results in the form of the collection's damage. Generally, factors such as less care, shortage of the technical staff, less budget, lack of proper infrastructure affect the life of rare material and its usage. Consideration of these factors is equally or even more important so that proper arrangements can be done to meet the generations' educational and research needs. Researchers have conducted studies to highlight the status, situations, problems and solution regarding the rare material available in the libraries (Allen, 2012; Baynes-Cope, 1996; Belanger, 1986; Jefcoate, 2000; Landon, 1979; Overmier, 1984; Roberts, 1967; Sirisawad, 2019; Shein & Lapworth, 2016; Sobucki, 2003).

### Acquisition

Rare book libraries were expensive to create, maintain and develop (Auchstetter,1990). Special collection departments collect and house the collection (Harris &Weller, 2012). Libraries acquire much rare material through donations. In the USA, the donor of rare material can claim tax deductions for donating rare material. Networking and building relationships with private collectors can build new donors. In this respect, library friends like passionate volunteers and alumni's contribution to enriching university libraries with rare collection cannot be underestimated. Moreover, the libraries should develop good working relations with rare book vendors and private collectors (Potter &Holley, 2010). There are many reasons which encourage people to donate manuscripts to the libraries. One of those reasons is the desire to dispose of the material effectively (Allen, 2012). Cambridge University Library acquired many manuscripts related to Islam through donations from variety of sources (Ansorge, 2016). The focus of the library was on collecting such material which had the origin of Asian and Australian material and consisted of printed and original materials. The National library built up its rare material through purchasing at reasonable prices and also got donors support



during 1950-1980 with an accelerating pace (Haddad, 2000). There must be provision for the acquisition of new material along with the refinement of existing collections (Landon, 1979). Archivists need to collaborate actively with relevant stakeholders. Archivist needs to make choices about the selection of material. They need to address the public expectations regarding the availability of the material at as large scale as possible (Shein & Lapworth, 2016). Archivist and information professionals play a vital role in accessing and managing the collection for the success of the projects (Jones, 2017).

### **Organization, Conservation and Preservation**

Professionals working in the preservation area have the mission to protect the cultural material (Conway, 2010). People will continue to organize and preserve the special print collections (Michel, 2005). There must be trained, skilled and knowledgeable staff entrusted to manage the rare collection (Roberts, 1967). There must be conservation and restoration program at work. Today, much emphasis has been given to the digitization of rare material, possibly due to the reasons that digitization increase access, reduces handling and use of fragile and original material, improve services to large user group and provide a mechanism for backup copy of rare material. Hence, it is seen that many digitization projects are focusing to convert its analogue material to digital one (Landon, 1979). The decision to select the item for conservation depends upon finance availability, title's value and condition. Priorities of the organizations also play a vital role in the selection of the collection for conservation (Williams, 1985). Special collection departments house the collection for preservation purposes (Harris & Weller, 2012). Preservation of the archives is an integral part of management's functionalities in the library, museum and other institutions whose purpose is to collect the rare material and ensure its availability (Conway, 2009). It was the librarian who had to evaluate the condition of its rare collection and set preservation priorities accordingly (Starmer et al., 2005).

### **Access**

Rare material must be maintained in a secure facility with allowing access to researchers (Landon, 1979). Special collection departments serve the purpose of making special collections accessible to users. Therefore, the special collection librarians aim to make their collection accessible and discoverable through creating electronic finding aids, faculty collaboration, digitizing material and using exhibits to show off the presence of special collection in their territory. The authors further

focused on outreach activities that make a library's special collection visible in innovative ways like digitization of special collection, participating in local area library groups, large-scale collaborative projects and holding receptions for the opening of different collections respectively (Harris &Weller, 2012). Archivists need to make the choices about the ways of access to rare material (Shein & Lapworth, 2016). Archivist and information professionals play a vital role in accessing, digitizing, documenting, organizing and managing the collection for the success of the projects (Jones, 2017).

### **Problems**

Research in archives' areas needs a lot of time and expenses (Tough, 2016). Acquisition problems of rare material are obvious. The researcher highlighted that the penetration of the second-hand market, high prices of rare items and donors attraction towards the second-hand market halted the acquisition of rare material at large scale (Haddad, 2000). Many older libraries house their rare collection in old buildings (Starmer et al., 2005) Inadequate environmental conditions such as fluctuations of temperature and humidity result in the deterioration of this precious collection. High temperature and relative humidity above or below than a certain level speed up the deterioration of books and can lead to mould growth. Similarly, light, both visible and ultraviolet, is responsible for photochemical deterioration. The renovation of the physical site and conservation treatments are the possible solutions for the deteriorated rare material (Belanger, 1986).

### **Trainings and Collaboration**

There is a dire need of special training for librarians, archivists and readers in the use of rare law books and manuscripts. Librarians and archivists must know how to maintain the physical well-being of rare materials for longer use? The researcher discussed a couple of training programs with participants aimed at the training of librarians, archivist, dealers, historians and collectors in the care and use of rare law books and manuscripts. Model curricula for law librarians might be developed in the use of rare materials (Cohen, 2001).

A project to digitize 13000 historical images of the Colorado State University dating from the 1830s to 1930's was started. These images linked the history of Colorado State University to local, state and national issues and its contribution to the society. The archivist-librarian collaboration brought this project with success. So, collaboration is a big factor in achieving big targets because in this way the





talents, knowledge, skills and experience are shared among each other and the success rate of a project is increased manifolds (Hunter et al., 2010).

The library was working to increase the digital contents of special collections to promote the usage of these resources (Nishioka et al., 2018). Library provides the rare material to people in digitized format (Wiederkehr, 2018). Some of the digitization projects are: creation of digital library manuscripts undertaken in Shivaji University, India (Bansode, 2008), digitization of rare books at British Library (Jefcoate, 2000), preparing a digital archive of rare Mongolian newspaper/periodical publications (Matusiak & Munkhmandakh, 2009), digital preservation of rare manuscripts in Assam, India (Mazumdar, 2009.)

### **Policy and Procedures**

A written policy provides an aid for material selection, a teaching tool for newly recruited staff, explain collection to users and donors. A study was conducted to survey the collection development (CD) policies and practices existed in medical school rare book libraries. It was found that only 20% libraries had CD policies (Overmier, 1984). Written CD policy is very important for any library, as (Schleicher, 2010) opines that written collection development policy helps evaluate resources, like scope, accessibility, currency and the physical space of a library may change overtime, but it guides current and future staff to manage whatever changes come.

### **Local Literature**

In Pakistan, there is a dearth of literature related to rare materials' status, its organization and use. Pakistan is rich regarding the availability of the manuscripts of different kinds. However, it is difficult to mention the actual number of collection of manuscripts in the country (Qutab, 2012). Researchers (Naseer & Mahmood, 2014) did a subject analysis of 5195 publications in library and information science research and found that Pakistani researchers had paid a very little attention towards rare books and manuscripts. However, few studies covered this area, notably are (Warraich & Tahira, 2010), who assessed the management issues of manuscripts collection in the central library of Punjab University, Lahore, in which authors identified the current status of manuscripts collection, their preservation and digitization. Researchers emphasized the need for strategic planning, training of library staff and marketing of manuscripts assets. Authors (Ameen, 2009; Haseeb, 2016) described the status of manuscripts in terms of its collection held by various university libraries of Pakistan and suggested the need of digitization, preservation and conservation of these assets. Researchers (Qutab et al., 2014) studied the

practices employed for the conservation and preservation of manuscripts in Pakistan. Researchers concluded that manuscripts and archives were neglected areas in Pakistan. Only preventive conservation was performed as a regular activity. Digitization practices were not up to the mark and needed improvement. Moreover, access to digitized materials was not provided through OPAC and repositories. This situation might reduce the visibility of one's cultural assets globally. Digitization of rare books got second priority after theses and dissertations in the university libraries of the country (Rafiq & Ameen, 2013). However, a study (Jaswal, 2016) presented some workable suggestions in saving the deteriorating archive and rare material through collective and collaborative digitization efforts. The researcher stressed that digitization without compliance of international standards would be a futile exercise. The author further recommended that the libraries involved in archival digitization in Pakistan should develop consortia so that the staff trainings, resources and experiences are shared among each other to complement each other in order to bring success to digitization projects.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative study based on multiple case research design. Multiple case research design was selected to explore the situation and existing status of rare material in the libraries of Lahore. This research design provided an opportunity for the researchers to select information-rich cases. "A case study is a good approach when the enquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the case or a comparison of several cases" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74).

A semi-structured interview guide (see appendix "A") was prepared with the help of existing literature and guidance of experts for data collection purposes. Prior to interviews of the participants of the study, pilot testing of interview guide was also conducted. Observation of documents (log registers such as registers containing record of library visitors) of the cases were also done wherever facilitated. This study examined three public and one academic library based on their rich collection. Considering the relevance, two individuals (head of the library and in-charge of the rare material's section) were interviewed from each library except the case four (public library) where the Head (Head of library) was not willing to participate in the study and, therefore, interview of the in-charge of the rare material section was conducted. The aim of conducting two interviews from each case was to reach the convergence of their reported data. The length of the

conducted interviews varied from half an hour to an hour. Prior permission was sought before conducting interviews. Prior appointments for conducting interview were also obtained from interviewees. Permission from participants was also sought for audio recording of their interviews. The interviewees were asked that use of cell phones and the arrival of visitors might be restricted during the interviews, so that the recordings and flow of interview were not affected. Six interviews were conducted in the participants' offices; whereas one participant chose a separate room for the interview. An android cell phone was used for the recording of interviews.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed using NVivo qualitative software version 10.0 and thematic analysis was performed to identify the patterns of the meaning of the data sets. Thematic analysis (TA) is used in qualitative research (Thomas & Harden, 2008). It is a simple method and is used to extract the "meanings and concepts from data and includes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns or themes. TA not only provides a flexible method of data analysis in qualitative research, but it also establishes the more systematic and explicit form of it" (Javadi & Zarea, 2016, p. 39). Data was imported in the NVivo to explore the data for the creation of the nodes. Word frequency query was also run on data to find the common themes for creation of nodes' structure. Word tree was displayed and memos were created.

## FINDINGS

The coding of all transcribed interviews was done initially and then refined it through second and third level coding. As a result, following six themes were emerged:

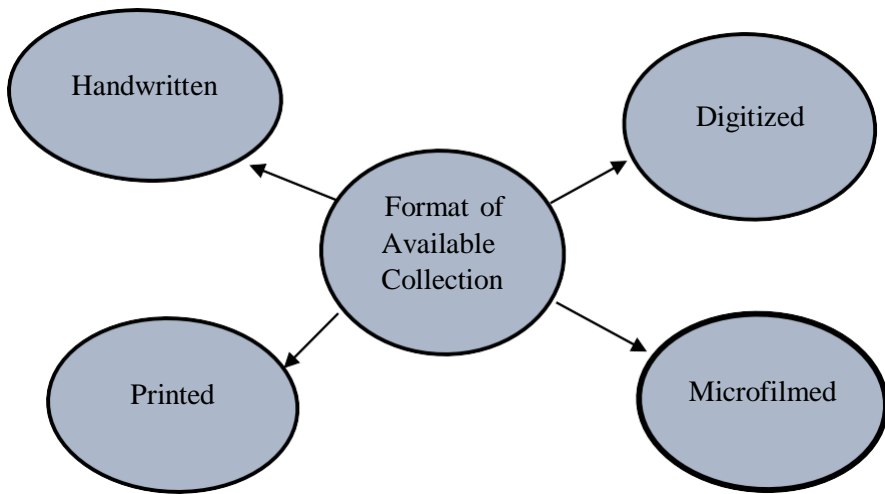
### **Perception of Rare Material**

The participants were enquired about their perceptions of rare material while acquiring and organizing this material, for example to which material they considered rare. Majority of the participants believed that the material which is old and not available otherwise except in their institutions is a rare material. Generally, the participants used to term such material as rare which has gained the age of fifty years and above. However, one participant mentioned Antiquities Act of Pakistan and said: "According to the antiquity act of 1975 an object which gained an age of 70 years, it becomes an antique in itself" (Case 1 P 1). It shows that there is proper legislation on such material in Pakistan. However; participants did not mention other procedures (acquisition, organization, maintenance etc.) to handle this

material according to the law. The participants considered the personal collection, hand written documents, old newspapers, magazines, contents with remarks of dignitaries etc. as rare material. One participant stated: “We have letters of Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal in the collection of rare material” (Case 1 P 1). Likewise, another participant said “we have handwritten documents. We have also newspapers in Urdu and English languages published during 1878 in rare collection” (Case 4 P 1). One interviewee stated “books with remarks of dignitaries” are available in the rare contents of the public library (Case 3 P 2).

**Collection, Acquisition, Organization, Dissemination and Use**

The collection housed in visited libraries is diversified in respect of its format, types, subjects and languages. There found to be a good and rich collection of rare books and manuscripts possessed by these libraries ranging from 10,000 to nearly two lac books and thousands of manuscripts.



*Figure 1. Format of the available collection*

The rare collection comprises of books, serials, manuscripts and gazette notifications which are very old aging from 50 years and above in both hard (printed or handwritten) and soft form (digitized or microfilmed). Most of the rare collection of these libraries was donation-based. Libraries acquire the rare collection through purchase and gifts (Byrd 1957). Participants revealed during interviews that people used to donate or sell their personal collections to the libraries, and the libraries also pursued their efforts to seek rare collections as gift or donations and avoid

purchasing of rare collection. While talking about the acquisition of this material, participants said that libraries came to know about the presence of a rare collection through their library members or donors. The donors are usually motivated and convinced by housing their collections in separate sections of the library and libraries offer the publishing of their catalogues respectively. Following statements provide evidence for this fact

*If any donor insists on the publication of his/her own separate catalogue of his donated material, the library does publish it. We have special halls reserved for housing personal collections, where we keep such (donated) material (Case 2 P 1).*

However, along with the donation, one academic institution had allocated funds for the purchase of manuscripts or other rare collection, and this institution procured rare material with the help of vendors. In this case, the selection committee decides what to purchase. Generally, there are committees in these selected institutions which deal with the acquisition, evaluation and purchase of rare material. These committees operate under different names (i.e. acquisition committee, library purchase committee, standing committee and evaluation committee etc.) but their functions are more or less the same; and these committees work under some specified guidelines/rules. The ultimate final decision-making authority is the chairman of the institution which sanctions the recommendations of the relevant committees.

As far as the usage of rare material is concerned, there is a great degree of variation; one institution (academic) reported that there was a great use of rare material especially gazette notification, manuscripts and other rare collection, whereas different institutions reported that the number of visitors interested in the rare manuscripts ranged from an average of five to ten on daily basis and one public institution reported that one or two research scholars consulted their rare collection per annum. When this was asked from the interviewees that what the reasons for underutilization of rare collection were, one participant stated:

*There should be no restriction on the use of rare material because due to the invent of internet people's interest in the study has been diminished (Case 4 P 1).*

It was observed that the institutional control of the rare texts left little space for the visitors to access them, and this might be the reason of minimal use of this material. The participants pointed out that a number of promotional activities like

projection of newly arrived material through the display of posters and notices, use of websites, developing user interaction by arranging seminars about rare material, and by conducting exhibitions on national days i.e. Pakistan Resolution Day (23 March), Independence Day (14 August), Allama Iqbal Day (09 November), and Quaid-e-Azam Day (25 December). Along with these, the participants mentioned that they had started digitization of their rare material for future use and access. The participants stated that they used to provide digitized copies of their fragile rare material to their users to save original material. Permission of photocopy and photography is normally prohibited. However, in some cases, it is allowed after ensuring that it is unavoidable for research purposes. One participant stated:

*We guide them first of all to wear gloves on their hands because these are very dangerous for open hands to touch such type of material (Case 1 P 2).*



*Figure 2.* Gloves available in the public library for handling rare material

As far as the organization of rare material is concerned, the libraries used Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC), Anglo American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2), and In-house developed schemes for the organization of their rare collection. All the participants mentioned the non-existence of any written policy for acquisition of rare material, even no written guideline existed either. However, a single participant stated that he followed UNESCO guidelines for rare material handling (Figure 3 & 4).

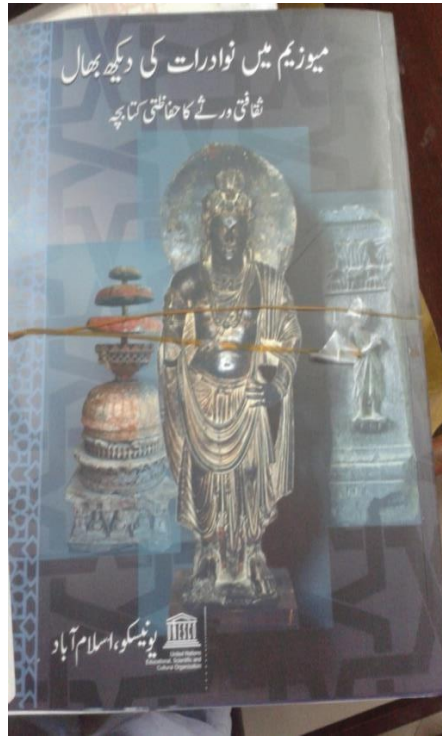


Figure 3. Care of Rarities in Museum: Safety Booklet of Cultural Heritage (Written in the Urdu Language)



Figure 4. Management of Museum: Training Manual (Written in Urdu Language )

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## **Preservation, Conservation and Security**

Questions about the institutions' strategies regarding preservation, conservation, and security of the rare material were also asked interviewees and it was found that institutions were practicing different strategies for preservation and conservation of their rare material. Use of fumigation chambers was common among all the institutions. One public institution used the traditional method of protecting its material from insects by placing plant leaves (*Azadirachta indica* leaves) in the pages of their books. Likewise, the temperature was maintained in the rare material's section of one academic and one public library to avoid humidity. However, two public libraries were not using any temperature control equipment necessary to maintain the required temperature for the safety of the collection. All the visited institutions were in the process to convert the material in digital format. Institutions did not outsource their material for treatment. However, it was found that proper preservation and conservation strategies were not being practiced in any of the participating institutions as there was the absence of preservation and conservation laboratories except in one. It was observed that general staff of all libraries was handling the rare material which shows that there is a dire need of hiring of specialized staff having expertise in handling preservation and conservation affairs. One respondent said: "There are no formal strategies. We need to be more careful. We need the latest ways and means. We need staff and other resources which we lack" (Case 2 P 2). It was observed that for security purposes, CCTV cameras and security gate were installed in one academic and one public institution. However, the two public institutions were in the process of installing the cameras and security gates. Security guards were also employed to monitor rare collection in all the visited institutions. Fire extinguishers and security alarm systems were also installed for safety purposes in all the organizations. However, it was found that all the visited institutions lacked in the disaster preparedness measures. Case 2 P 2 highlighted that all the stake holders need to give more attention to the rare material collections. More investment should be invested in this valuable collection.

## **Budgeting**

The theme of budgeting expressed a general consensus from all the participants of four cases. The findings show that institutions had no separate funds for the purchase of rare material and, therefore, the general budget was being used for acquiring such material. Only one (academic) institution had separate funds for



the purchase of rare material. It was observed that the Punjab Government was the funding source followed by public institutions own funding. On one hand, one institution (public) also got funding from the central government and another (academic) managed to acquire funding from Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. Likewise, a variation was found in the authority to spend money on the purchase of the rare material. It was established that the chairman of the library committee has the final authority followed by the different committees e.g. book selection committee or executive committee for selection and acquisition of the rare collection. One participant highlighted that "Head of Departments and Librarian have the collaboration in spending the money" (Case 2 P 1). The researcher observed that the general process to spend money was followed by all institutions. Variations were found regarding the process of spending money.

### **Staff Skills and Training**

This theme emerged when the respondents were asked about staff skills and trainings to handle rare collection. Institutions were found working without specialized staff skills except one (academic) and one (public) institute. It was observed that skills relevant to the preservation, conservation, caring and digitization of rare material were required for the visited institutions' staff especially in the two public institutions as there were general staff who was handling the collection. Even one participant stated, "The staff is performing additional duties as there is no specialized staff" (Case 4 P1). Another participant highlighted, " Not at all, neither does anyone avail oneself of opportunity nor does the administration offer one" (Case 2 P 1). It is worth mentioning that all the interviewees stated that they communicated the training need to the top management.

### **Problems, Solutions and Suggestions**

The multiple levels coding in NVivo helped to emerge theme "problems, solutions and suggestions". The participants discussed numerous problems associated with the rare collection.

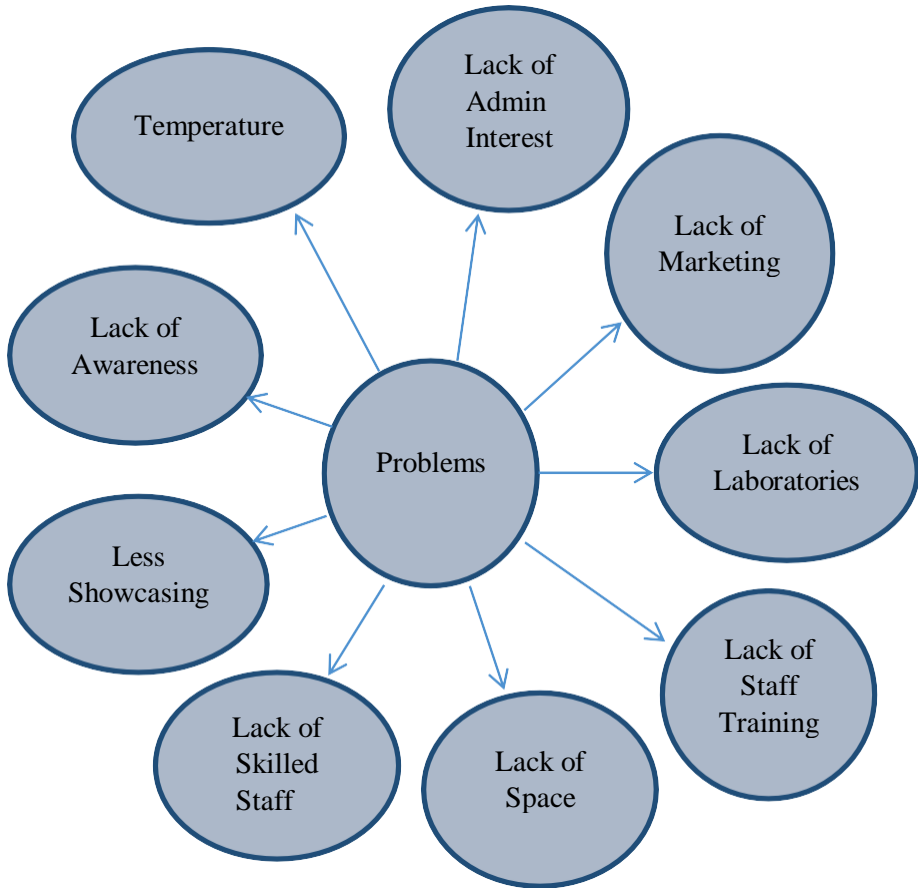


Figure 5. Problems in handling Rare Collection

Problems include Lack of interest on the part of administration, lack of laboratories, lack of training opportunities and training institutes in the country. Lack of space was also highlighted by the interviewees. One participant stated “showcasing of rare material is required. We have little space to showcase it properly” (Case 3 P 2). Another participant stated: “Our biggest problem with respect to rare material is lack of physical space” (Case 2 P1).

Moreover, the participants also highlighted the lack of public awareness, less multilingual expertise of library personnel, non-existent of continuing professional development, lack of proper temperature control measures, issues of cleanliness and lack of marketing efforts as problems. All these problems affect negatively on the successful acquisition, organization, preservation and usage of rare material.

One participant highlighted that "Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is necessary for all staff so that they can be updated" (Case 2 P 1). It was observed by the researchers that controlled temperature was not maintained in different rare collections' sections of the two public libraries which could be a major factor of deterioration of the rare asset of these institutions. One participant stated "humidity needs to be controlled" (Case 1 P 1). To avoid humidity for material's safety, necessary measures to maintain the controlled temperature are required in these libraries. Researchers also observed the unprocessed rare material in bulk especially in public libraries which seems to be in danger if not processed on urgent basis.

The participants (heads of library and in-charge of rare material section) proposed a number of solutions and suggestions to reverse the problems mentioned above. The participants suggested that collaboration with rare material holding organizations in the area of staff training and conservation strategies would be helpful for them. The newly and fully equipped infrastructure (labs for conservation, equipment for preservation, trained staff, controlled temperature, sufficient budget and buildings with sufficient areas) must be ensured by the concerned government authorities and solid decisions need to be taken in this regard. One participant mentioned: "Libraries should have trained staff, fully equipped infrastructure, labs and enough financial resources" (Case 3 P 2).

Moreover, all the participants of the study were in favour of providing open access to rare material and it could be provided through the digitization of the rare collection. According to them, this would facilitate access to fragile rare material at one hand and availability of digital backup plan on the other hand.

The role of curriculum could not be minimized, suggested by a number of participants; they stressed for the need of improvement in the Library & Information Science as well as Information Management curriculum to incorporate the preservation strategies, and introduction of different regional or international languages in the curriculum. One participant stated:

*Professionals should have knowledge of languages. There is absence of support related to languages and people hesitate to learn new languages arguing that there will be no difference of salary among professional having more languages' knowledge and those who possess less then why they should learn Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Sanskrit. (Case 2 P 1).*

One participant further stated: “Department should teach language-related additional subject (Case 2 P 1). Another participant stated: “a subject must be included in the curriculum (of library sciences or information management) for such types of person (professional) which (who) adopt this profession like archives” (Case 1 P 2).

Participants wanted to have a separate block reserved only for the rare collection; because they had housed their collection along with the general collection of their library. One participant stated:

*There should be separate blocks for a special collection. We do not have (separate block) this (special collection) is housed with the general collection. Separate blocks are very much necessary (Case 3 P 1).*

## DISCUSSION

A review of published studies found that findings of the present study are not very different from past studies. Formal policy for the acquisition of rare material is not prevalent in selected cases and these results are consistent with past study (Overmier, 1984) which concluded with similar results.

Results of study highlighted that visited libraries acquired most of the rare collection through donations and purchase, indicating another source of acquiring such collection and these findings are consistent with past studies (Allen, 2012; Ansoorge, 2016; Garnett, 1994; Haddad, 2000; Potter & Holley, 2010). However, it was also found that separate funds were not available for the purchase of the rare collection. Past studies (Garnett, 1994; Karakas, n. d.) also highlighted this issue.

It was also found that visited libraries included rare contents such as letters, personal diaries and manuscripts in their rare collection in print and electronic format and previous studies (Harris & Weller, 2012; Nishioka et al., 2018; Potter & Holley, 2010; Spivey, 1950; Wiederkehr, 2018) found similar results.

Researchers found that collection was housed in the old buildings and previous study (Starmer et al., 2005) also found similar results. It was found that visited libraries were using classification systems for the organization of collections. These results are also consistent with previous study (Arellano & Garrido, 2000) which maintained that classification systems were being used for the organization of special collections.

The problem of lack of proper processing of rare material in selected libraries is also consistent with the studies conducted in different parts of the world including the USA as (Jones, 2004) highlighted that processing of backlogs of the

manuscripts and other rare material was one of the major issues of the research libraries of America. However, researchers found that visited libraries were in the process of digitization of rare contents and past studies (Harris & Weller, 2012; Kashimura et al., 1998; Landon, 1979, Nishioka et al., 2018; Rafiq & Ameen, 2013;

Wiederkehr, 2018) also found that libraries were working on digitization and recommended that there was a need to go for digitization as it has multiple benefits such as it enhances usage, creates backup copy, reduces deterioration of collection.

In Pakistan, the extreme weather conditions necessitates the proper preservation and conservation strategies to be followed in the libraries, but this also seem to be deficient, and this neglect is similar to results of previous studies (Belanger, 1986; Landon, 1979; Qutab et al., 2014; Starmer et al., 2005) which concluded and recommended that there was need of proper conservation and preservation strategies. Findings highlighted the need to control humidity for the safety of collection from deterioration and past study (Belanger, 1986) also maintained that humidity deteriorate the collection. Therefore, it should be controlled.

Results showed that use of visited libraries was very low and past study (Allen, 1999) also highlighted the same issue that use of libraries was low. Respondents felt the need of awareness among the public about the importance and usage of rare collection. Past studies (Allen, 1999; Harris & Weller, 2012; Warraich & Tahira, 2010) also highlighted the need for awareness of such collection among the public through different means such as promotional activities.

Results indicated that participants of selected libraries acknowledged and suggested the need for training and hiring of specialized staff to meet the needs of rare collection. These findings are similar to studies (Allen, 1999; Cohen, 2001; Jaswal, 2016; Roberts, 1967; Warraich & Tahira, 2010) which found matching results and recommended that staff training should be conducted and trained and specialized staff should be hired and involved in handling rare collection.

The study also found that respondents highlighted the need of collaboration for handling of rare material. Previous research (Allen, 1999; Hunter et al., 2010; Jaswal, 2016; Shein & Lapworth, 2016) also recommended the need of collaboration efforts for the handling of rare collection. Results also indicated that respondents recommended that there should be subject on the rare collection in Library & Information Science course. Literature (Allen, 1999; Cohen, 2001) also found similar results and recommended the need and importance of instructional programs.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the interviews and observation findings, it can be concluded that rare collection in the selected libraries of Lahore is available both in print and electronic format. The collection is acquired through gifts, donations and purchase. However, separate funds are not available in the selected public and academic institutions to enrich and conserve rare material. The study found non-utilization of these resources due to multiple reasons mentioned above. The rare collection is an important societal and national asset which should be given proper care, importance and fully utilized for research objectives.

The present study made some recommendation based on findings for the proper handling and utilization of such material. Firstly, extensive funds should be allocated for proper management and usage of the asset available in these libraries. For organization purpose, it is recommended that a single classification system should be followed to maintain uniformity. However, it is housed in older buildings, where sophisticated preservation, conservation and digitization techniques are not applied yet which highlights the need for new blocks/buildings for the proper management of the rare material collection. The rare collection is under-utilized due to less public awareness and restricted or closed access to the rare collection. To handle this issue, it is recommended that public awareness campaigns, events, exhibitions and displays should be conducted by these libraries on a regular basis for the proper utilization of the rare material. The digitization of rare material is suffered due to less and non-specialized staff that is not well equipped with modern technological skills and it necessitates the need of hiring staff having expertise in the preservation and conservation of the material for rare collection holding libraries to ensure the long-lasting of the collections. Staff training is also needed in the areas of conservation, preservation and digitization which may play a vital role in meeting the requirements of preservation of rare material. Moreover, the written collection development policy encompasses the rare collection is non-existent in all the visited libraries which shows that attentions of the concerned authorities is highly needed toward this aspect. Collaboration with the rare material holding institutions should be practiced as it may be a defining factor in managing the rare collection effectively. The attention of all the stake holders is required for effective acquisition, management and preservation of the rare collection as well as for the fruitful use of these assets.

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## Appendix "A"

### Interview Guide

#### Status of Rare Collection in the Libraries of Lahore, Pakistan

*Rare material* refers to any item included in a library's special collection because of the age, historical value, craftsmanship, rarity (as in the case of autographs, letters or diaries), and other items of varying significance (Potter, 2010).

#### Perception

- 1.1 Which type of material do you consider as rare material?
- 1.2 What type and format of rare material contents available in your collection?
- 1.3 Do you have a written policy for rare material? If yes, then what are its elements? (Service clientele, parameters of collection, collection acquiring based on user needs)

#### Identification of Rare Material

- 2.1 How do you come to know about rare material? (vendors, donors, staff or any other source)

#### Selection and Acquisition

- 3.1. What is your acquisition policy and modes of acquiring rare material? (purchase, gift) (In respect of any material or evaluation of any material). (independent selectors, committees, individuals or groups).
- 3.2. Who is responsible for selection of rare material items? Are there any written guidelines?
- 3.3. Do you make efforts for seeking rare material?

#### Organization

- 4.1. How do you organize rare material?
- 4.2. Do you use any cataloguing and classification scheme for rare material? (International, Local, or In-house scheme)

#### Staffing

- 5.1. Do you have specialized staff for organizing rare material?
- 5.2. What are the skills possessed by staff dealing with rare material? (Chief, Incharge section's)
- 5.3. What are the skills you wish to have in them?
- 5.4. Do your staff need training, if yes, then in what areas?
- 5.5. Did you communicate the need of training to your Chief?



5.6. Has your staff got any training during the last 2-3 years: if yes, what are the outcomes?

Finances

6.1. Do you have separate funds for acquisition and maintenance of rare material?

6.2. What are the sources of funding?

6.3. Who is the authority to spend money for acquisition and maintenance of rare material?

6.4. What is the process to spend the money?

Accessibility to Users

7.1. In what ways the rare material is accessible to users? (digital form, use under surveillance)

7.2. Who are entitled to access the rare material in the library? And conditions for allowing access?

7.3. How much rare material is being used? (Availability of use record)

7.4. Whether you promote your collection? If yes, then how?

7.5. Do you conduct exhibition of selected rare material?

Safety and Security

8.1. What are the security measures taken to ensure the safety of rare material? (theft prevention, under supervision/surveillance)

8.2. What are your institution's strategies to preserve rare material? (Digital preservation and its backup plan, temperature, humidity, ultra violet rays)?

8.3. How do you conserve rare material? (outsourcing, own conservator, conservation lab access etc.)

8.4. What is your disaster preparedness plans? (fire, flood, earthquake, man-made disaster, insurance)

Problems & Solutions

9.1. What are the problems in handling and managing the rare collections? How do you address those problems?

9.2. In your opinion what is needed to manage rare collections better in all aspects such as organization, access and preservation?

9.3. Any other comment?